# The Great Men of God

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THE

# GREAT MEN OF GOD.

## BIOGRAPHIES

OF

## PATRIARCHS, PROPHETS, KINGS AND APOSTLES,

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS OF DOCTOR GUTHRIE, DEAN STANLEY, BISHOP OXENDEN, AND OTHER EMINENT DIVINES.

WITH

## ORIGINAL SKETCHES

BY

REV. W. F. P. NOBLE.

FORMING

A CONCISE BIBLE HISTORY AND GALLERY OF SACRED PORTRAITS.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY I. W. WILEY.

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# INTRODUCTION.

THE title chosen for this book is a happy one—"THE GREAT MEN OF GOD,"—great men in the judgment and estimation of God, or great men in and through the power of God, or yet again, men great in godliness. There are many kinds of greatness recognized in the world among men—great conquerors, great rulers, great statesmen, great scholars, and great benefactors. And the world does well to hold such in remembrance, and to preserve their lives for the example and inspiration of others. But the world's great men may or may not be great men of God. To be great toward God, or great in godliness, is the highest order of greatness, and to be entitled to rank in this high order requires certain indispensable traits of character. A great conqueror whose fame may fill the world, may after all be only a great destroyer. A great statesman, winning the applause of nations by his wisdom and forethought, may be but an ambitious aspirant after place and power. A great scholar may be only a mere selfish plodder in books, and seeker after knowledge for his own gratification and pleasure. A hero whose martial deeds may attract the admiration of the world may be only a daring, reckless adventurer, sustained by no true courage, and inspired by no noble motives. Back of all outward manifestations and action lie the true elements of character, and the real requisites of true greatness. These must be sought in the motives, the inspiration, and the purposes of the life. Among even the world's truly great men must be found purity of motive, a lofty, manly inspiration, and a broad, generous, unselfish purpose; otherwise, even in the world's estimation, their fame is but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Much more, in "great men of God" shall we find these elements of character combined with others still higher and greater.

In God's heroes, to human greatness must be added divine greatness—greatness on the godward side of life. Accordingly in these great Bible characters, while we would recognize every one of them as great in his simple manhood, we discover still other more

prominent elements of character which lift them into a higher and diviner sphere of manhood. They are great through God. They are great for the sake of God. They are great by the inspiration and help of God. Their lives are directed with reference to the will and purposes of God. They are consecrated lives. They are lives sanctified and animated by faith and obedience. And this faith in God and obedience to his will is their peculiar characteristic, and is what lifts them into their pre-eminence as great men of God. They may be great statesmen, as Moses and Samuel and David; or great heroes, as Joshua and Gideon and Samson; or great in wisdom, as Solomon; or great reformers, as Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel; but they are all great men of God through their faith and obedience to him, and the consecration of their lives to his purposes. They are chosen instruments of God. And in this higher and broader greatness, they belong not merely to the Bible and the Jews, but to the race.

As an illustration of this true greatness, was there ever more implicit obedience than that of Abraham's? His early home was Ur of Chaldea, on the right bank of the Euphrates, near the ancient head of the Persian Gulf. At the command of God he at once leaves his country and removes to Haran, where he prospers and accumulates property. In the midst of his prosperity and quiet rest the Lord again calls, and immediately he goes to a strange land, occupied by a hostile people, and this with no title or prospect but the promise of God, "I will make of thee a great nation." Yet upon that single warrant Abraham leaves country, kindred, home, every thing that attaches one to the place of his nativity, and went out, "not knowing whither he went." When prosperity had again crowned his new home and labors, and the "child of promise" had come, and was growing up to manhood, again the command of his God came to him in a form sufficient to shake the foundation of the strongest faith, and to arouse rebellion in the most obedient spirit: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, *whom thou lovest*, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering!" Terrible as was the command, the faith and obedience stood the test, and Abraham immediately obeyed, "and went unto the place of which God had told him." Thus faith in God directed him in the whole course of his life. He planned nothing of himself, nothing for

himself. Following the leadings of divine Providence with the one supreme motive to honor and obey God, he carried with him the presence of the Lord, and wherever he fixed his abode he consecrated it with God's altar. Well may such a man be recognized as a "Great Man of God," and be called the "friend of God," and the "father of the faithful."

Again, how beautiful and how great a life on its mere human side was that of Joseph—so beautiful that an attempt has been made to dramatize it, and to produce it on the stage, with the accessories of scenery and music. And yet so grand is it on its godward side, that to portray it, to expand it, even to comment upon it, is to take away its charm. It is a life lived toward God and directed of God. Hence we see magnanimity triumphing over meanness; generosity requiting envy and malice; the man who had become so great in wisdom and power showing himself greater still in humility and love; but above all we see the spirit of piety honoring God in all the events of life, and dictating forgiveness toward men for injuries which God had turned to blessings. Up to the time of his sudden exaltation, each particular event of his life had seemed to tell against him, every body was his enemy; and yet all things were working together for his good! Who would not trust and magnify the Lord who holds all the complicated threads of life in the guiding hand of love? And who does not see at a glance wherein lay the great strength of Joseph!

As a still further illustration let us take one of the prophets. Dean Stanley has pronounced Elijah the Tishbite, "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel produced." His was indeed a rugged and stormy life, and his name is worthy to be associated with that of Moses—the representative of the prophets, as Moses was of the law, and both to bring the grandeur and glory of the Old Testament and lay them at the feet of Jesus as the homage of God's greatest men paid on the mount of transfiguration to the supreme man. Not Cesar surpassed this old prophet in courage; not Luther or John Knox was bolder than he. His whole history is made up of a succession of great, striking pictures even to the last. The chariot of fire and the horses of flame seem to be but the natural close of the wonderful life. Independent of his greatness as an inspired prophet, we can see that there is a

native grandeur about the man, that his is a colossal nature. Fearless, independent, he towers above kings and princes; while next to his loyalty to God, is his true, devoted love to his country, his firm, unsullied patriotism. And yet, apart from his prophetic character, what is Elijah but a man of grand and noble nature, lifted up into a divine hero by his unflinching faith in God, and his implicit obedience to his will and purposes!

In almost every nation there arise at long intervals remarkable men, whose lives, characters, or teachings, effect great revolutions in its political or religious life. Such men stand as columns to mark the dividing line, or the epochs, in human history. Such in ancient Greece were Socrates and Plato; such in China were Confucius and Mencius; such of another character were Alexander, Cesar, Charlemagne; and in more modern times such were Cromwell, Bonaparte, and Washington. But wonderful as these men were in the greatness of their genius, the grandeur of their achievements, and the social and political changes they produced, they differ immensely and in the most important respects from these "great men of God." Alexander had his strong cohorts behind him, Cesar his mighty legions, Bonaparte his heroic columns, and even Washington his enthusiastic and admiring countrymen, consecrated with himself to the achievement of a grand purpose. But many of these heroes of God were alone and single handed, and yet wrought greater revolutions, and effected wider and more permanent changes, than they all. Paul was a hero of the grandest type, a model hero, though his transcendent courage was never exhibited on the field of battle. Those great men of the world attract our attention by their conquering arms, or by the productions of their genius; but these men of God often attract our attention and claim our admiration from the very fact that they are not surrounded by the accessories of outward pomp and grandeur, or the glamour of the schools of learning and philosophy, and yet their achievements surpass those of the great men and martial heroes of the world. They surpass them also in the heroic qualities which they exhibit. They face death, not occasionally, but constantly without flinching; not amid the excitement of battle and the shouts of men, but often alone and unfriended; not surrounded by the presence and sympathy of admiring thousands, but surrounded with enemies and over-

whelmed with taunts and jibes, and covered with disgrace. Where the courage of the boldest fails, theirs, indeed, seems to take a loftier bearing. History is full, indeed, of heroes of many kinds, but no book so abounds with them as the Bible, nor do they anywhere else assume so lofty and so sacred a type. Among these it is the heroism of piety, of faith, of obedience; in the world it is often only the heroism of reckless daring, or of boundless ambition. The world's heroes conquer cities, but God's great men conquer themselves.

We do not mean that all, or even any, of these great characters of the Bible are perfect men. They are human like ourselves; they are, indeed, only men of like passions with ourselves, raised into a high sphere of excellence by the power of faith and obedience toward God. And nothing is more striking than the honesty of the Bible in narrating, without extenuation, the failings and sins of God's own people. It is a token both of the historic truth and the divine wisdom of the record. The lives of these men of God are presented to us as human lives unfolding, growing, and maturing in grace and goodness, under the leadings of a divine Providence and the sanctifying power of the divine Spirit. The fact that God uses imperfect men, and even sometimes turns their mistakes and wrong doings to the furtherance of his own plans, is never used to justify, or even to palliate, their errors or sins. Though subsequently a Solomon may be born of Bathsheba, and become the glorious successor of David, yet the adultery is not forgotten or condoned, but is severely condemned and punished. The wicked fraud of Rebekah and Jacob in the imposition on Isaac is narrated, but both are condemned, and bring upon themselves serious punishment; strife and bitterness were brought into the household, and sorrow fell upon herself and her son. To her unhappiness arising from the absence of her favorite son, to him banishment from his home and mother, were the consequences of their mutual deception and fraud. Among God's great men is Gideon, the type of moral courage and of unambitious and unselfish heroism; but there is also Samson, the hero of physical strength. But Samson is not held forth as a model, but as a warning; showing how extraordinary gifts from God may be abused by strong sensual passions; and the greatest hero, by dallying in the lap of pleasure, may be shorn of his strength and renown.

We are, indeed, too apt, while wondering at the greatness of character and the lofty heroism of the characters described and eulogized by the pen of the sacred historian, to forget that, after all, these were but men, and to ascribe their superior character and greatness entirely to miraculous power—a divinely imparted quality—as if the man was a mere passive instrument that could act no otherwise than he did. This would be to lift them out of the sphere of our sympathy, and place them beyond all power of influence and inspiration as examples for us. We must not forget that they were like ourselves, with the same hopes and fears, the same dread of suffering, and the same shrinking from danger and from incurring vast responsibilities. Nor should we forget that, though God often chooses "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," yet for great deeds he selects great souls. God's methods with men in the olden time do not differ in kind from his methods with us in our own day. He chose his instruments; they were men; by his providence and grace he made them such instruments as he could use, but still left them men. But though he found it necessary, in the early, half-barbarous age of the world to bring about events by miraculous interposition and miraculous influences upon men, yet neither the instruments themselves nor the designs differ in any way from those we now behold. Whether the instrument be Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Augustine, or Luther, or Wesley, it is God working out his plans through great men. The former are just as much men in human history as the latter, although we are inclined to look upon them simply as inspired and miraculous characters. The only difference in them is, that the former perform their great deeds under the explicit and direct direction of God, and the latter theirs under the guidance of his providence and the leadings of his Spirit. Hence the humanity of these instruments of God is as evident in their lives as is the miraculous and divine which leads and assists them in their great deeds and lives.

The individuality of these men is apparent to us; their peculiar traits of character, their dispositions, their culture, are visible in all their works. Indeed, most of them seem to have been chosen for their peculiar work from the very adaptedness of their peculiar character for the special work and mission to which they were called. They impress us at once as the right men in

the right places. Moses and Isaiah, Abraham and David, could not change places. As far as we are acquainted with the characters of the apostles, they seem to have been chosen of Christ as representative men; that is, men representing certain great distinct classes, each marked by strong characteristics. "John," says Dr. Schaff, "is unquestionably one of those highly-gifted natures, endued with a delicate, contemplative mind, lively feeling, glowing imagination, and tender, loving heart. He knew how to communicate in the most simple, childlike dress the profoundest truths which furnish the maturest thinkers inexhaustible materials for study." James, the brother of our Lord, is of that large conservative class who, when they accept the new, do not wholly relinquish the old. Calm, prudent, and conciliatory, he labors more to harmonize and consolidate than to make aggressions. Peter, a man of intense feelings and affections, represents those bold, impulsive characters of great energy and practicality, who would be leaders in whatever circumstances they might be thrown. Thomas is a natural skeptic, who believes nothing except on the most undoubted testimony, and must be not only an eye-witness of marvels, but must test them before he accepts them, anticipating the scientific skeptic of even the nineteenth century. Paul is conscientious, thoughtful, rational, argumentative. Each of these God uses in his own place, and in accordance with his own character and capabilities. We thereby receive from them the complete and many-sided presentation of Christianity.

The heroes and martyrs of the Bible, then, were men with the same hopes and fears and emotions that belong to men of every age, and it was designed that they should awaken in us the same personal interest and sympathy. Simply as men, they are entitled to as high a place on the scroll of fame as the heroes of any other age or nation; and as the moral heroes of the race, whose passage through life has cast one broad beam of light over the earth, they deserve a far higher place in history and are worthy of immortal praise. In the Bible the lives of these great men are fragmentary and scattered, the narrative being interrupted by various events occurring at the same time but with which they had no immediate connection. It is the work of the sacred biographer to select out of the mass of sacred history every thing of interest belonging

to each individual, either directly stated or referred to, and bring them into a connected narrative. The Bible is the great, and in one sense the only, source of information. Still, the increasing knowledge of ancient customs, geography, and languages, and poetry, and the further light obtained from contemporaneous history, enable the writer to discover new points of interest, and to bring out into bolder relief the individual traits and actions of these great men. Such has been the course pursued by the eminent men who have sketched the lives contained in this volume. Such names as Dr. Guthrie, Dean Stanley, and Bishop Oxenden are a sufficient guarantee that the work has been done faithfully and eloquently.

Doubtless the great object of sacred biography is to set before us the lives of God's saints as examples and inspiration for our own. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; but no part of it more so than the lives of the grand saints of old. "While I mused," says one of them, "the fire burned;" and it is not in the nature of things for a Christian man to sit down to his Bible, and turn to the history of its saints, and hold communion with them, without imbibing somewhat of their spirit. As he muses on their virtues and piety he will feel, in holy desires, the fires that glowed in their bosoms kindling and burning in his own. In the faith of Abraham and the chastity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses and the patience of Job, the piety of David and the fidelity of Daniel, in the zeal of Paul and the love of John, we see what attainments others have reached, to what height of grace we ourselves may aspire. We cannot contemplate such characters without admiring them, nor can we long admire without desiring to resemble them. Nor need we fear to aspire so high. The course to which God calls the humblest Christian is one grander than they attained. Should we reach their height, far above us as they now seem, we shall not yet have attained, nor be already perfect. Far above them all stands Jesus, the perfect example, calling to us still, "Come ye up hither." So, then, "leaving Abraham binding his son on the altar; Job sitting amid the ruins of all his fortune and the graves of all his children, bowing submissively to God; David descending from a throne to tune his harp and fill a royal palace with sacred melo-

dies; Daniel on his knees, with a window thrown open to Jerusalem, within eyesight of malignant spies and earshot of the lions ravening for their prey; Elijah on Mount Carmel, with his back to the altar of God and his face to a hostile world, 'among the faithless faithful only he,' leaving these grand spectacles below, let us still look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Forgetting the things which are behind, let us press forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling in Jesus Christ. The goal is this: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The real secret of these great lives is their consecration to the will and purposes of God. They are consciously under his protection and guidance. They are supported by their abiding trust in his providence. Their prosperity, they feel, comes from him, and in adversity they are confident that he has not forsaken them. They move forward in the unfailing faith that their lives are ordered of God. Hence they are strong, faithful, heroic, and patient. So we may feel that God has a plan concerning every one of us. Our lives do not move on at haphazard, neither are they altogether shaped by our own choice; but the Lord had a purpose in bringing us into being, and is directing our lives toward the fulfillment of that purpose. His purpose toward his people is always good. We can, indeed, frustrate the moral end of our creation, by our perversity and our sin; but if we adapt ourselves in submission and obedience to the will of God, he will perfect that which concerns us. He will not abandon his own plan. It matters not that he is so great and high and we so insignificant. He who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the air, and watches over the minutest laws and processes of the physical universe, thinks upon his children with a father's watchful and forecasting love. When we find ourselves in trouble we may not infer God has forsaken or forgotten us. Our path may lie through the sea; but he will make the waters as a wall upon the right hand and the left. Our way may lead through the valley of the shadow of death; but he will go with us; his rod and staff will comfort us. The very trials of life, disciplining our hearts to a loftier faith, separating us from a worldly into a spiritual life, may be a means of perfecting that which concerneth us in the wise and holy purpose of God.

These great men of God are our examples, our forerunners in

the ways of God, and in the paths of our struggling human life. When one must endure a trial it is comforting to know that a friend has borne the same and come forth victorious. When one must face a danger, it is encouraging to think upon another who has gone through it unscathed. Though the stream is high, and the night is dark and boisterous, we can venture upon the bridge over which others have passed in safety. As we enter into the trials and conflicts which we as followers of God must endure, how inspiring and strengthening to turn the eye toward these "great men of God," this great cloud of witnesses who compass us about, and who have triumphed in the power of God, and above them all to hear the voice of Jesus saying to us: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

What history can show a line of heroes and martyrs to be compared to these witnesses for God and truth? What line of truth has had an attestation so courageous, so persistent, so triumphant? These heroes have been witnesses and martyrs—not for something objective and tangible, not for a visible and earthly kingdom with its thrones and promises—their sustaining motive was a subjective faith: faith in God, in an invisible person; faith in realities that were not seen, in promises that were not yet fulfilled; in a country, a kingdom, in the far distant future. Nothing personal prompted this faith and devotion; nothing selfish nurtured these hopes. So far as this world is concerned, most of these men of God had every thing to lose: their reward and hopes were in the future. They anticipated us; they paved the way for us in tears and blood, awaiting our perfecting for the fruition of their hope. Let us enter manfully into their labors, that we may come at length into their rest and reward.

I. W. WILEY.

BOSTON, *September* 13, 1875.

# Great Men of God.

## I.

### ADAM.

GOD had framed and fitted up this vast fabric, this magnificent palace, the earth, worthy of the inhabitant whom he designed to occupy it, and worthy of himself. He had created, suspended and balanced the greater and the lesser lights, and settled the economy of the whole host of heaven. And then, in condescension to human feebleness of thought, he is represented as counseling and deliberating, and so designs and produces ADAM, the first of men.

When the earth is to be fashioned and the ocean to be poured into its appointed bed, when the firmament is to be expanded and suns to be lighted up, God says, *Let them be!* and they are created. But when MAN is to be made, the creating Power seems to make a solemn pause, retires within himself, looks for a model by which to frame this exquisite piece of workmanship, and finds it in himself: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth

upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

And oh how fair must that form have been which the finger of God framed without the intervention of a second cause! How capacious that soul which the breath of God immediately inspired! Behold "our first father" taking possession of his fair inheritance, his vast empire, in all the majesty of unclouded reason and all the beauty of perfect innocence; possessed of every bodily and every mental endowment; placed in the garden of Eden to dress and to keep it; entering on his employment with alacrity and joy, and surveying his ample portion with complacency and delight. The prosecution of his pleasant task unfolds to him still new wonders of divine power and skill. The flower and the shrub and the tree disclose their virtues, uses and ends to his observing eye. Every beast of the field spontaneously ministers to his pleasure or his advantage; all the host of heaven stands revealed to his capacious soul, and God himself, the Lord of all, delights in him, and converses with him as a father and a friend.

The naming of the animals is a point of special interest in the sacred narrative. Before Adam all his vassals of the brute creation appear, and at one glance he discovers their nature and qualities and gives them suitable names. And this act indicates command. It is the exercise of the power delegated before in the words: "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This dominion is referred to in other parts of the Scriptures as if it was a favorite thought. And, indeed, the sway that man exerts over all his fellow-tenants of the globe is among the most remarkable things in his history. How wonderfully they are all made to serve him for food or raiment, for his need or convenience or luxury! The strongest and the wildest are subdued to his use. He outwits the craftiest. He outstrips or tires down the fleetest. The huge elephant of the torrid zone, who could trample out his life and scarcely feel that anything was

under his foot, or toss him into the air like a ball with his snaky hand, stoops down to receive his weight or marches to aid him in his battles. The huger whale of the polar seas is compelled to furnish light for his dwelling. The bear is pursued over the ice to supply warmth for his limbs. He reaches fish at the bottom of the water, and brings down the birds from their flight in the sky. The tiger of the Indian jungle has been known to quail before the determination of his eye, and the lion and the panther are trained to leap over his arm as if they were spaniels. The worm and the bee bring their contributions to him, one spinning for his manufactories, and the other furnishing confections for his table. Thus the small as well as the large sign themselves his subjects. He is crowned with this glory and honor.

Again, we have here exhibited in a figure the discerning mind of man, observing all the varieties and distinctions of things, and passing his decisions upon the universe. A single instance of this discrimination images all the rest. He who divides animate nature into its several kinds—and he must divide in order to denominate—extends the same intellectual operation to everything else. This leads to the classifying of whatever exists, whether actually present to the senses or shaped only by the inner faculties. And this is science. It is at least the origin and condition of all science. It was well fitted, therefore, to represent the inquisitive and apprehending spirit of man, ranging through the whole domain of things of which he is himself so small and transient a part, seeking everywhere to name and to know, dividing, collecting, generalizing, arranging the insects and mosses in ranks, and grouping the stars in constellations, and devising methods by which the most subtile operations of his own understanding and the shadowy forms of his thought find their distinct provinces. He classes with as much ease the truths that are open only to his mental perception as he does the grossest substances. Not only does "whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea" pass under the criticism of his research, but all that floats in the

greater deeps of his imagination, affection and conscience comes under the judgments of an inner sense, the highest that he possesses. They all assume the respective titles that he assigns. They all obey the mysterious laws that rule over him and them.

We have here implied the great faculty of speech which distinguishes man from the creatures about him. They cannot speak to one another except in the inarticulate cries of nature, but he names them all through that varied utterance which the divine Spirit has breathed upon his lips. The gift of language is so kingly an endowment that he could have attained to none of his eminence without it. Speech is one of the leading points of his supremacy. But as yet he has none with whom he can hold communication. Name the beasts he may, but he cannot converse with them. He is alone, and therefore, even in Paradise, but half blessed. The rich profusion of Eden is but half relished and enjoyed, because there is none to partake of it with him. Being corporeal and earthly, he is unfit for the society of pure spirits; being rational and divine, he is above the society of the most sagacious of the subject tribes. "For Adam," in the wide extended creation, "there was not found a help meet for him." But no sooner is the want felt than it is supplied. God, who does nothing imperfectly, at length makes the happiness of Paradise complete, and fills up the measure of Adam's joy: "And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

What an important era in the life of Adam! What a new display of the Creator's power and skill and goodness! How must the spirit of devotion be heightened, now that man could join in *social* worship! What additional satisfaction in contemplating the frame, order and course of nature, now that he possessed the most exalted of human joys—that of conveying knowledge to a beloved object! What a new flavor have the fruits which grow

in the garden of God acquired, now that they are gathered by the hand of conjugal affection and recommended to the taste by the smile of complacency and love! Our imagination cannot exceed the conception which the brief description of Scripture conveys of the joys of Paradise, the happiness of our first parents in their unfallen condition. They must have been perfect in body, beautiful of complexion, symmetrical of form, compact of structure, dignified of mien, and graceful of motion. No seed of weakness, or decay or pain lurked within them. Destined for immortality, they were instinct with a buoyancy that knew no depression, with a health that knew no change, and with a vigor and bloom that could never fade away. No fatigue distressed, no sickness visited them, no accident or calamity ever interfered with their free and unlimited enjoyments. Placed in a habitation worthy of their own dignity and of their Maker's architecture, where the earth was clothed with beauty and the sky was overspread with magnificence, and where the sun and the moon and the stars displayed their greatest lustre and diffused their most benignant influence, they found every talent and every grace that each possessed, every personal endowment, every mental and spiritual ornament, every gift of heaven and earth, inexpressibly enhanced in value by the inseparable companionship of One who could sympathize in all their feelings, agree in all their views, take an interest in all their contemplations, reciprocate all their endearments, and participate in all their joys. Thus, in an atmosphere impregnated with life, amid streams which flowed in beauty, amid fruits that delighted the taste and flowers that charmed the eye and music that enchanted the ear and scenes of countless attractions which gratified and satisfied every sense, they were appointed by a gracious Creator to take up their peaceful dwelling-place, and to spend the days of their existence in the enjoyment of entire and unalloyed happiness. Oh blessed and glorious state!—a morn without a cloud! a sun without a spot! a landscape without one drawback to diminish its unequaled loveliness! Was bliss like this bestowed

but to be blasted? And must Adam's chief felicity issue in his ruin?

We are reluctantly brought forward to that awful revolution which at length took place in Adam's condition and character. Of the duration of his innocence and happiness we have no account. His history now becomes blended with that of the wicked and malignant spirit who had "left his first estate" of holiness and felicity, and who, having artfully seduced our first parents from their innocence, exposed them to the wrath of God, procured their expulsion from Paradise, rendered them a prey to fear, shame and remorse, and subjected them to pain, disease and death.

The circumstances of the case, according to the Scripture account of it, were these. The devil observes the serpent to be an animal of peculiar sagacity and penetration, and fixes on him as a fit instrument of seduction. Fearing a repulse from the superior firmness and discernment of the man, he watches for, and finds, the unhappy moment when the woman, being separated from her husband, opposed to his wiles inferior powers of reason and intelligence with greater softness and pliancy. He addresses himself to a principle in her nature, the immoderate indulgence of which has proved fatal to so many thousands of her daughters—*curiosity*—curiosity, the investigator of truth, the mother of invention—curiosity, the prompter to rashness, the parent of danger, the guide to ruin. Having first gained her attention, he excites her to doubt and to reason in the face of a positive command, rouses in her a spirit of pride and ambition, and at length persuades her to make the fatal experiment. She eats of the prohibited tree, and by transgression acquires the knowledge of *evil*, whereas she had hitherto known only *good*.

By what arguments Adam was prevailed upon to become a partner of her guilt we are not informed. From the apology he made for his conduct, it is to be inferred that female insinuation and address misled him from the law of his God. And thus were both ruined by the operation of principles in themselves good and

useful, but carried to excess, unchecked by reason, unawed by religion. Eve perished by a curious and ambitious desire after a condition for which God and Nature had not designed her—a desire to be "as God, to know good and evil;" Adam fell by complaisance to his wife, carried to unmanly weakness and compliance, yielding to his subject, bidding defiance to his sovereign.

And what words can express, what heart can conceive, the bitter change? All his posterity have experienced the melancholy transition from health to sickness, from ease to pain; very many have passed from affluence to indigence, from glory to shame; and not a few have exchanged empire itself for banishment or a dungeon. But more than the accumulated weight of all these at once falls on the devoted head of our guilty first father. The eyes which before met the approach of God with rapture now are clouded with sorrow, tremble with fear, or strain with remorse and horror, at the voice of the Almighty. That tongue which was once tuned only to the accent and the language of love has in a moment learned to reproach and upbraid. The heart which glowed at the promise and the prospect of a fair, numerous, and happy progeny now sinks in dejection at the dismal apprehension of that guilt and woe in which his folly had plunged all his hapless children. Where innocence sat enthroned, there fell despair broods over her own stinging reflections and tormenting fears. Above, the awful throne of an offended God; beneath, a fathomless gulf, kindled by the breath of Jehovah as a stream of brimstone; within, a troubled conscience, like the raging sea, incapable of taking rest. "The glory is departed: the gold is become dim, and the most fine gold changed."

And now, too, a revolution in outward circumstances takes place, corresponding to that which had passed on his internal constitution and character. Adam must no longer possess that paradise of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Justice drives out from Eden the man who had cast himself out from the

favor of God. A wall reaching up to heaven and immovable as the decree of the Eternal prevents the possibility of return. The flaming sword of the cherubim bars all access to the tree of life. His labor, formerly his delight, must henceforward be accompanied with pain. The subject tribes throw off their allegiance, and either shun or threaten their lord. The elements change their influence, and the fair domain becomes a vast solitude. The sole partner of his former joys, now become the cause and the companion of his guilt, becomes also the companion of his woe. Sad reflections embitter and increase their common misery, and stern death stares them in the face.

But "will God contend for ever, will he be always wroth?" Then "the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he has made." Behold, a dawn of hope arises, and the promise of the Most High saves from despair. The moment man becomes and feels himself a miserable offender, that moment is the gospel preached unto him; as the woman was first in the transgression, so from her the prospect of salvation arises; and it is declared that "the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan," who had, in deceiving her, destroyed her posterity, should, by one who was peculiarly her posterity, be destroyed and slain. Thus th y leave Eden, supported and cheered with the expectation of triumph over their bitter enemy, and of being restored at length to the favor of their offended God. To keep alive this hope, as well as to afford present relief from shame, at this period, it would appear, *sacrifice* was instituted. The same victim shed its blood, the type of atonement, and furnished its skin to clothe the naked, thereby presenting the emblem of a perfect righteousness, to cover and shelter the naked soul. And thus early, distinctly and unequivocally was Christianity taught to mankind.

In process of time, however, Adam has the felicity of becoming a father, and enjoys the satisfaction of seeing the blessing pronounced upon him in his better state, notwithstanding his apostasy, taking effect Eve becomes the joyful mother of two

sons—Cain and Abel—and the earth begins to be replenished. Behold the first parents of mankind exulting in affections unknown, unfelt before—exulting in this fresh proof that God had not forgotten to be gracious. Behold the nuptial tie strengthened and confirmed, the voice of upbraiding and reproach turned to the language of gratulation, complacency, and love.

Adam observes with growing delight his sons increasing in stature and wisdom. Stung with keen reflection upon the happiness which he had vilely thrown away, and the misery which he had entailed upon his hapless children, how would he exert himself to repair that loss!—how forcibly inculcate, by his own fatal example, the obligations of God's holy law!—with what gratitude lead them to the promised atonement!—with what heartfelt delight infuse knowledge into their opening minds!

Man was destined to labor from the beginning, and for his punishment guilty man must labor with the sweat of his brow. But all the punishments of Heaven, in reality and in the issue, are blessings. It is the privilege and the happiness of Adam and all his sons to be employed, though to weariness and fatigue. Accordingly, the heirs and possessors of the whole globe, as soon as they arrive at man's estate, betake themselves to the humble and necessary occupations of that simple state of human nature. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground."

But Adam, we find, has taught his sons to blend religion with their secular employments—nay, to make their very employments the monitors and the means of religious worship. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof; and the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." Gen. iv. 3–5. And oh how early did the different passions and affections of the human mind discover themselves! Abel brings with his offering a humble, pious

and believing spirit; Cain approaches the altar of God with a proud, selfish, wicked heart. And sad it is to observe, that the first disagreement in the world, the first human blood that was shed, arose from a religious cause, which is designed of God to be, and is in itself, the dearest bond of union among men.

An event now took place in Adam's family by which every former grief must have been renewed and embittered, and to his inexpressible mortification he finds himself a root of bitterness, of which all his branches must and do partake. Cain, incensed at the preference given to his brother's offering, burning with envy and resentment, embraced his opportunity, and finding himself alone with him in the field, puts Abel to death. Thus man becomes the executioner of the dreadful sentence of the divine law upon man—brother upon brother. What must have been the emotions of Adam's soul when this sad news was brought him! —to lose a son, a pious, promising son, almost an only one, prematurely, unexpectedly, by the hand of his own brother!—the one dead, the other worse than dead—a wretch unworthy to live! How would his own transgression again stare him in the face! How would he again accuse himself as the author of his own wretchedness and the propagator of woe on woe to his posterity! The empire of Satan over this miserable world would now seem confirmed, and the purpose of the divine grace would be apparently defeated. But God yet takes pity on fallen, guilty man, being mindful of his promise, and Seth is given to supply the loss of Abel—Seth, in whose line the promise runs, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ should come. And thus the divine interpositions always seasonably and suitably meet our necessities and wants.

Adam's own forfeited life is prolonged to many generations, and he lives to see his posterity increased to a great multitude, inventing and cultivating the arts which support, adorn, or comfort life. But the time approaches at last that he must die. Mercy flew as on the wings of a dove to his relief; justice walks

with slow and steady steps to his punishment. By himself sin had entered into the world, and death must inevitably follow and pass upon him and upon all men. He had seen the ghastly appearance of death in the person of his murdered son; he must now drink the bitter cup for himself: "And the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

This is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to heart. And thus at length decayed the fabric which God himself had reared—thus "the dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it." And thus must conclude the history of every life, though protracted to a thousand years, whether adorned with virtues or sullied with vice—whether passed with noise on the great theatre, or obscurely spent in the shade. To this complexion the wise and the beautiful, the brave and the good, as well as the simple and the homely, the timid and the vicious, must come at last. Here "the rich and the poor meet together;" here "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

# II.

## NOAH.

MORE than fifteen hundred years had now rolled by since the first day when Adam and Eve stood upon the earth. During those years there was indeed enough to show that man had become a corrupt and fallen being. But still God bore long and patiently with him. He looked upon him with an eye of anger, but his anger was mixed with compassion. Like as a father pitieth his wayward child, so did God pity the sinner then as he does now. His Spirit strove with him. Again and again he called him to repentance, but no heed was given; the call was made in vain.

At length the cup became fuller and fuller, till it reached the very brim, and God could spare no longer. And then he determined by one awful stroke to destroy the world—that world which he had made so fair, but which man had stained and marred by sin. He determined to sweep off every family of man with one single exception.

And why that one exception? Amidst all the wickedness that prevailed, God's eye marked one who differed from the rest—a solitary grain of wheat amidst the worthless heap of chaff—a single sheep among the herd of goats—a faithful one amidst the many faithless.

This was Noah, who in the time of the world's greatest wickedness dared to serve the Lord. Oh how hard it must have been at such a time to stand out from the rest and live for God! It is

easy to be on his side when there are many with us. But to stand alone when there is no friendly voice to cheer us on, no one on whom we can lean, no brother to support us by his example, then to declare plainly whose we are and whom we desire to serve,—this does indeed require no small amount of grace.

What a blessed thought it is that the Lord has always had his servants in the world! In Cain's days there was a righteous Abel; afterward an Enoch, and then a Noah. Sometimes on a dark night, when no stars are seen and the lonely traveler loses his way, how welcome is the light that glitters from some solitary cottage by the roadside! So in the world's darkest time, when wickedness filled the earth, how blessed to know that there was one dwelling from which the light of God's truth shone forth! Such was the household of Noah. There alone was the Sabbath kept holy; there alone was the voice of prayer and praise heard; there alone was the family altar raised and sacrifice offered; there, in that dwelling, was the home of holiness and peace.

And now God honors Noah by making known to him his purpose concerning the fearful punishment that was hanging over the world. He tells him of the coming flood, and bids him prepare for it.

Observe, however, the goodness of God. He does not *instantly* send the flood, but he mercifully pauses before he strikes the blow. A long, long warning is given. A respite of a hundred and twenty years is granted to a world of sinners. Long did he sound the warning bell before he poured out his fury upon them.

How was this time spent? As for Noah, God had directed him to build an ark in which he and his family might be preserved, and he takes God at his word and instantly begins the work appointed him. St. Paul says, in Heb. xi., "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

And the rest, what did they do? How did they employ the precious breathing-time so graciously allotted to them? Did the

thought of that awful visitation bring them on their knees? Was the cry heard through the length and breadth of the earth, "Save, Lord, or we perish"? No; they slept on in carelessness and unconcern; they disbelieved the warning and treated it with scorn.

Meanwhile, Noah was not merely concerned for his own safety —he had a heart to feel for others also. He went up and down among his fellow-men, entreating, imploring, beseeching them to turn to God. But he was as one that mocked unto them. His words were as an idle tale. Oh, there must have been deep earnestness in his preaching! And he showed, too, by his own example, that he himself believed in the truth of his errand. If ever a man longed to save others from perishing, it was he. Some listened with coldness, some rebuked him for pressing them so closely, some treated him with scoffs and insults.

But during these hundred and twenty years nothing could turn Noah from his purpose. He continued *building* and *preaching*. Plank after plank was added to the ark, till at length all was completed amidst the jeers and scoffs of the beholders.

So things went on, and the awful day gradually approached. The busy world was still occupied about its daily affairs: "They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." There were no signs in the heavens that foreboded the threatened storm. Day after day the morning dawned, and the evening closed in just as usual; day after day the sun shone brightly in the clear sky, or if the clouds gathered, they were soon dispersed again.

But at length the people looked up and saw the heavens growing dark and the sky becoming more and more leaden, and presently "the fountains of the great deep were broken up," and the very "windows of heaven were opened." Oh, would they not at that moment have given worlds had they believed Noah! But it was now too late; their day of grace was forever past.

Thus was the Lord's vengeance poured out upon a guilty

world, and thus was his mercy shown toward his believing servant. The little company contained in the ark were preserved in safety, and Noah lived for years afterward to praise God and thank him for his marvelous deliverance.

Now, there are two points which I am anxious to fix on your mind:

Noah preached *by his words*, and so may we. We are not all ministers, but we may each one of us speak a word for our Master, in the hope of leading others to his happy service. You may have no rank in the Church, but I would not have you stand back on that account. A private soldier has no rank in the army; but though it is not his duty to command or lead others, or even to train the recruits, yet may he not fight and bleed for his country? May he not enlist as many soldiers as he can find? And so the gospel calls *you* to fight the good fight of faith, to recruit the ranks of Christ's army. It calls upon all, even the meanest soldier in the ranks, to engage in this blessed work.

But Noah preached *by his life*. He was "a preacher of righteousness." Take any parish, and imagine ten or twenty holy, earnest, consistent men living in it—men whose conduct is guided by God's word, who heartily set themselves to act in all things according to his will—men who are living for another world. Now, what a vast influence for good such men would have among their neighbors! Their example would tell; their very lives would preach a daily sermon; their holiness would condemn the ungodly; their earnestness would put to shame the careless; their faith would encourage the timid.

Ah! this is the preaching we want. Pulpit-preaching must be left to ministers, but *the preaching of the daily life* is for all. Go, dear reader, and preach thus, and God will make you a blessing to many. The poorest, the feeblest and most unlearned among you may thus show the power and blessedness of real religion.

# III.

## ABRAHAM.

IN Abraham we have one who, save our first father Adam, is in some respects the most remarkable man, the greatest character, in history. Not the mighty Nimrods nor Pharaohs nor Alexanders nor Cæsars nor any other man, has left such a broad mark on the world, though he had no home on its surface but a tent, nor property in its soil but a tomb. His name is known where the greatest emperors and conquerors were never so much as heard of. There is no quarter of the globe to which it has not been carried, and it is the only one which is venerated alike by Jews and Christians and Mohammedans; for whatever be their differences and jealousies, all of them, in one sense or another, claim an equal relationship with this distinguished patriarch, saying, "We have Abraham to our father." Other men, of great statesmanship or military powers, have founded nations; but since the days of the creation or of the deluge he is the only man who was the father of a nation—the fountain from which a whole people sprang. The oldest of our families are but of yesterday compared with his. And as no house in the world is so ancient, to none has the world owed so much as to his. Through him the Saviour came. To his descendants God committed those great truths which have overthrown the most ancient idolatries, have tamed the wildest savage, have emancipated the slave, have raised prostrate humanity, have dried up its bitterest tears and redressed its greatest

wrongs, and are destined to overturn Satan's empire throughout the whole bounds of earth, and establish on its ruins the reign of a holy and universal peace, restoring Eden to a defiled and distracted world, and, as in the days of primeval innocence, to humanity the image of its God.

The biographer of any distinguished man considers himself fortunate if he can present, in the frontispiece, his readers with a likeness of his subject. We are fortunate enough to possess one of Abraham, and in it a likeness more to be depended on than those of the Pharaohs the Egyptians have left us carved on their tombs, or the marble busts of the Cæsars that adorn the galleries of Rome. Our likeness of Abraham is a genuine one, he, indeed, being the only Scripture character, or rather, the only character in all ancient history, of whose portrait so much can be affirmed. We have it not in any antique sculpture or painting, but in a form more true and faithful. He lives in the well-known and characteristic features of his descendants.

Types of the Church, his race have suffered, and also survived, the changes of four thousand years, the saying that described their early being equally applicable to their later history—this, namely, the more they were afflicted, "the more they multiplied and grew." With a tenacity of life unexampled in the history of any other people, and which proves them to have been God's peculiar care, neither Babylonian, nor Assyrian, nor Grecian, nor Roman, nor long centuries of Christian oppression, has been able to destroy, or even to absorb them. Clinging as tenaciously to each other as to their faith, they have lived, wedded, died, buried among themselves, mingled as little with other nations as oil with the water amid which it floats. The English, for example, are a mixed race—so mixed that the blood of Britons, Romans, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, meets and mingles in their veins. Not so the Jews. It is nigh four thousand years since Isaac and Ishmael met to lay their father in his rocky tomb, yet the blood of Abraham flows as pure in the veins of his Hebrew children as when

it first sprang from its source. This is plain from the very remarkable similarity they bear to each other—a resemblance so remarkable that whether he is an old-clothes man or a courtier, a distinguished singer or a dirty beggar, one who pants under an Indian sun or wraps his shivering form in Arctic furs, walks on 'Change a prince of merchants or keeps a booth in the foul purlieus of London or the still fouler Ghetto of Rome, there is no mistaking an Israelite. His features, if not his speech, betray him. Not only so, but we recognize these features in the world's old paintings—those which represent the manners of ancient Egypt and the events of that time—not far remote from Abraham's own day—when Pharaoh, to use the words of Scripture, "made the children of Israel to serve with rigor, and made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in bricks." In all ages the Jews have been, and in all countries are still, so like each other, that we may safely infer that their original was like them. It is impossible to account for this identity of features otherwise than that they bear their father's image—that Abraham's features are repeated and multiplied in theirs. Any person, as I know from experience, by observing the remarkable resemblance among all the copies of some famous statue—the Apollo Belvedere, for instance, or Venus de Medici—is able to form, before seeing it, a very correct conception of the original. Even so, since, with a few exceptions, all Abraham's descendants, ancient and modern, in this and every other country, bear quite a remarkable resemblance to one another, we may certainly conclude that in the Jew we have a faithful portrait and a living likeness of his great progenitor.

Prejudices exist against their type of features as strong almost as those felt by many against the negro and colored races, of which I could not give a more striking illustration than is to be found in the paintings of the old masters. It is a remarkable fact that, though our blessed Lord was a Jew, they never give him the features of his race, but, as if they sought thereby to in-

crease our horror of their crimes, reserve these for Iscariot, who betrays him, and for the priests who eye the Man of sorrows with scowling and malignant looks. Yet this is a mere prejudice, and like that felt against the colored races, is due, as it becomes us to recollect, to circumstances more discreditable to Christians than to Jews—to those who feel the prejudices than to those who suffer from them. The case of the Jews, in fact, is in many respects parallel to that of the negro races. Robbed for long centuries of their rights as men, regarded with undisguised aversion, treated with every possible indignity, and everywhere most cruelly oppressed, what is bad in their character has been the inevitable result of circumstances in which others, not their own choice, placed them; and for such as made either them or the negroes what they now are to abuse and despise them for being so is to add insult to injury, and to cruelty the grossest injustice. Like their countryman in the parable, they have fallen among thieves, and such as cherish the prejudices with which they have been long regarded resemble more the priest and Levite that passed by on the other side than the good Samaritan who took compassion on the man bleeding and poured wine and oil into his cruel wounds. Where the Jews have got a fair chance, they who have kept separate have exhibited another property of oil—they have risen to the top. Brought under Christian influences, they who retained the features of the patriarch's face have exhibited some of the noblest features of his character, by the one as much as by the other proving their honorable lineage, and their right to say, "We have Abraham to our father."

It may be noticed as a curious and interesting fact, that, while Abraham is seen to this day in the features which characterize Jewish men, the very remarkable beauty of his wife often presents and repeats itself in Jewish women. Beauty, no doubt, is always a fading charm, and to its envied possessor, in many cases, a fatal one. Yet it is a good gift of God, and whether found in human beings or in the plumes of a bird, the colors of a

flower or the glowing tints of an evening sky, is a source of innocent pleasure; nor can it be wrong to notice that which men inspired of the Holy Ghost not unfrequently mention. They tell us, for instance, that "Rachel was beautiful," and that "Esther was fair and beautiful." They celebrate the charms of Abigail; and not confining their remarks to female beauty, they tell us that he whose appearance won the hearts of the maids of Israel, and whose brave battle with the giant formed the burden of their songs, "was of a beautiful countenance." What David gave to Absalom, his guilty and unhappy son, he probably inherited from his own mother. Any way, it is plain from Scripture that, while some races are almost hideous from their ugliness, the Jewish women were remarkable for their personal charms; and indeed it is alleged that some of the finest specimens of female beauty are still found among them. This is more than a curious fact. It forms one of those indirect proofs of the truth and divinity of the Bible which, though indirect, are not the less but the more valuable. The fountain corresponds with the stream, the ancient record with present physiological facts; for it would appear from the Bible that Sarah, the mother of these lovely women, was perhaps the greatest beauty the painter's art has preserved or poets have sung. Her charms were so remarkable that they dazzled the eyes of Egypt, and so enduring that at an age whose wrinkles and gray hairs make other women venerable, she retained all the bloom and loveliness of youth.

Water, whether it springs on the shore or bubbles in the mountain-well where the eagle dresses her plumes and the red deer slakes its thirst, never rises higher than its fountain; and if, in like manner, children's mental powers form a standard whereby to judge of their parents', we must believe Abraham, judging from his descendants, to have been in mind, as well as in piety, one of the greatest of men. Take, for instance, a skull of each of the different races of mankind, and placing them at random on a table before an anatomist, ask him to select that which indi-

cates the highest mental capacity. Without knowing anything whatever of their history—from what graves they were obtained or to what branches of the human family they belonged—he lays his hand at once on the skull of the Jew. This, take it for all in all, is the best on the table. Vastly superior to those of the aborigines of Australia and the ancient Peruvians, that, though separated by a great gulf from the animal creation, stand at the bottom of the human scale, it is visibly superior to the skulls of those Greeks and Romans that in ancient, and also of those Teutonic races that in modern, times have marched at the head of civilization and seemed destined to rule the world. The star of Abraham is in the ascendant here. However morally debased, the Jew stands pre-eminent for his mental powers, and has retained his superiority in circumstances which have degraded other nations almost to the level of beasts. Amid the fire that has burned for ages, the bush remains unconsumed. Here, then, is a race which, after suffering oppressions and degradations sufficient to crush the very soul out of them, is mentally second to none, perhaps superior to any. This is a remarkable fact. It proves what the Bible leads us to believe—that a special providence watches over the outcasts of Israel, preserving them for some grand end. And it proves more—this, namely, that Abraham, "the hole of the pit out of which they were dug, the rock out of which they were hewn," their great progenitor, was no common man, but one who stood, as well in point of mental ability as of faith and piety, "head and shoulders" above the mass of men.

This may correct some erroneous notions which many, misunderstanding the language of Scripture, entertain regarding the government of God. He had a great work to do on the earth, and in Abraham he selected a great man to do it—an instrument eminently adapted to accomplish his end. This is, so to speak, God's ordinary rule; anything else is exceptional. Having great ends to accomplish, did he not in old times select great men to

do them, in the cases of Moses, of Joshua, of David, of Daniel, of Paul, and in later times in the cases of Luther, of Latimer, of Calvin, of Knox, and of the Wesleys? Apart altogether from their piety, these all were men of pre-eminent natural abilities. They were the foremost of their time. No doubt God can work by many or by few—smite a giant with a pebble from a stripling's sling, or scatter a host by the flashes of a lamp and the blare of an empty trumpet; and for the very purpose of reminding men that though Paul plant and Apollos water, the increase is with him—in saving souls as well as in ruling the destinies of the world—he occasionally selects the weakest instruments to accomplish the greatest ends. But such is not God's ordinary practice. They altogether misread or misunderstand his word who think otherwise. How much such ideas are due to men's greedy selfishness or their supineness, I will not undertake to say. But it is not true that any one will do for God's work, and that, while great sacrifices are to be made for secular objects, and the most brilliant talents secured for secular offices, the service of the King of kings, the offices of the sanctuary, the pulpit, the missionary field, the Sabbath-school, may be left to pious weakness. Such an idea compliments God's power at the expense of his wisdom, it being the part of divine as well as of human wisdom to select the means best fitted for the end in view.

Before proceeding to the grand moral and religious features of the patriarch's character, I would draw an inference of considerable practical importance from the case of Abraham and of almost all those men who have left a broad mark on their own and on future ages. These cases prove that God ordinarily works out his purpose by means, and not by miracles—not aside from, but according to, the regular course of Nature; therefore should his Church seek to enlist the highest genius on her side. Her duty is to remove, in the position or poverty of such as minister at her altars, those obstacles which unquestionably deter many from entering who would adorn her pulpits and prove of the

highest service to the cause of Christ. To win souls and advance his cause in an indifferent and hostile world, let Hannahs give their Samuels, and Jesses their Davids; and acting with the wisdom of Saul, who, whenever he found a valiant man took him into his service, let the Church, on finding talents associated with piety, take them into her service—enlist them in the sacred cause of Him who crowns all his other claims on us with this—he spared not his own Son to save us.

## ABRAHAM'S CALL.

The history of infidelity, were it written, would present a succession of ignominious defeats—defeats due not to any want of ability in those who have assailed the truth, but to this, that its defenders have driven them out of all their positions. The history, the morality, the theology, the consistency, the authenticity and genuineness of the Bible, the truth of its prophecies and the very possibility of its miracles, have been all attacked, each in its turn, and with the same result. We have seen the soldier return from the fields of war with scars as well as medals on his breast; but our religion has come out of a thousand fights unscarred, from a thousand fires unscathed. She bears no more evidence of the assaults she has sustained than does the air of the swords that have cloven it, or the sea of the keels which have ploughed its foaming waves—than some bold rocky headland, of the billows that, dashing against it in proud but impotent fury, have shivered themselves on its sides. With few exceptions, the writings of infidels have sunk into entire oblivion. Their names, and those of their authors, are alike forgotten. Not so the name of Jesus—of him Voltaire boasted he would crush; not so the word of God—the blessed book which is the world's most precious treasure, and often man's only solace, as well in palaces as in cabins. While the works of once famous skeptics are left to rot on bookshelves, where the moth devours their memory and the spider wraps them in her web, every year sees the Bible trans-

lated into some new tongue, acquire a greater influence and receive a wider circulation. Fulfilling its own glorious predictions, it is bringing nearer the appointed time when, rising over all opposition like a flowing and resistless tide, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters the channel of the deep.

One wonders how the men who now assail our faith can hope for success where Hobbes and Bolingbroke, Voltaire and Rousseau, David Hume and Gibbon, giants in genius and in intellect, totally failed. Christians, possessing their souls in patience and peace, may calmly contemplate the puny assaults of modern infidelity. There is little in these to fill our camp with alarm, or make its Elis tremble for the ark of God. Assailing the faith from new ground, infidelity undertakes to prove the Bible false from its alleged discrepancy with the phenomena of Nature and the discoveries of science. But a few years, we doubt not, will show that though she has changed her ground, she has not changed her doom. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Science may, as science has already done, guide us to a sounder understanding of some things in the word of God. While she corrects any mistakes into which the interpreters of Scripture have fallen, there is nothing to dread. Why do the heathen rage? The only result of using the facts of science to undermine the foundations of religion will resemble that wrought by some angry torrent when, sweeping away soil and sand and rubbish, it lays bare and thereby makes more plain the solid rock on which the house stands, unmoved and unmovable.

The man who attempts to build a pyramid on its apex would not act more absurdly than some modern philosophers, so called. They base the most extravagant theories on grounds utterly inadequate to support the ponderous superstructure. Propounding doctrines concerning our origin opposed to the Bible and destructive of our dearest hopes, they ask us to embrace them on

grounds such as no judge and jury would attach the least weight to in a court of law. On grounds so feeble and puerile, and in plain opposition to the facts related in the opening pages of the Scriptures, they assert that our origin was in a monkey, or rather in a *monad.* Believe them, and man reached his present condition by a process of development which required millions of years ere it carried him up through the ages of insect, fish, reptile, bird and beast, to the supremacy he enjoys, the height he now stands on. Others, not prepared to commit themselves to such extravagant vagaries, but animated with a spirit of equal hostility to the Christian faith, assert, on grounds equally weak, if not equally ludicrous, that though our first appearance was not in the form of a monad, an oyster or a monkey, it was in the form of a savage. Believe them, and man's primeval state was not one from which he fell, but from which he rose—one, in fact, of lowest savagedom. And however widely these opinions differ, if either of them be true, farewell to our fondest hopes and our faith in Scripture as the word of God.

In regard to the latter of these views—for the first we may pass by as the ravings of philosophy run mad—it is opposed to the oldest and universal traditions of the world. These afford abundant evidence that the history of man does not present a being rising from a lower to a higher condition, but the reverse. Examine the legends of the rudest tribes, and they will be found to contain memories, though misty, of a past but higher and nobler state of being—of arts, of accomplishments, of a refinement of manners and of, in many instances, a purity of morals which only exist among them now in tales and songs. Not tradition only, but all history besides, proves that man, left to his own resources, has not risen, but invariably sunk, in the scale. The bias to this, which we explain by the fall, may have been corrected in certain instances by providential and preternatural causes. But who ever examines the records of nations will find that the tendency of morals has always been to become more corrupt,

and the tendency of religions to become more idolatrous and impure. They exhibit a constantly increasing departure from the truth. In proof of this I appeal to the history, among extinct nations, of Greece and Rome, and among existing ones, of India and China. Trace their morals and religion upward, and as we advance nearer to their source we find the one becoming less impure and the other less untrue, until a period is reached when the resemblance between these and the morals and religious belief of the patriarchs is striking—is indeed quite remarkable. It is like ascending a river whose waters are polluted by the towns and manufactories that have sprung up on its banks—the nearer we approach the green hills where it springs from its fountains, the purer runs the stream. Man, unaided and left to his own resources, has never risen from a lower to a higher state. On the contrary, we find the vices which early ages discountenanced and forbade becoming not only universally practiced, but even shamefully deified, and the one God of man's first pure faith multiplied into hundreds, in some cases into thousands, and in a few even into millions, of inferior and usually immoral divinities.

These remarks, which are not inapplicable to the present times, and which may help to reassure the hearts of some seized with unnecessary alarm, have been suggested by the fact that Abraham's immediate ancestors were idolaters. What a rapid declension this! and what a remarkable illustration of man's tendency to sink rather than to rise in the scale of moral and intellectual being! Almost ere the gray fathers of the flood were dead—ere, perhaps, the marks of its awful ravages had vanished from the face of the earth, mankind had forgotten its lesson, and begun to worship the creature in place of the Creator. Abraham certainly was the son of an idolater, and if old Jewish and Mohammedan traditions are to be believed, of one who was a maker as well as a worshiper of idols. "Your fathers," said Joshua to the people of Israel, "dwelt on the other side of the flood, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served

other gods." Ur of the Chaldees was the home of the patriarch's race, and the religion they professed was the Sabean—a faith of Eastern birth, and one which presents idolatry in its oldest and least offensive form.

No man becomes at once and of a sudden either a fiend or a saint. His descent into a lower, like his ascent into a higher, condition, is gradual—always accomplished, though more rapidly in some cases than in others, step by step. Of this the history of idolatry presents a striking instance. Look back on Greece and Rome. There, in Bacchus and in Venus, and in other divinities, we see how men (as they do still in India) make gods of the vices which they practice, not only glorying in their shame, but throwing the halo of religion around the grossest immoralities. But mankind had not sunk so low as this, nor become worshipers of stocks and stones, of birds, beasts and creeping things, in the days of Abraham. That Sabean faith in which he was born, and which his fathers followed, and which still lingers on earth among the Parsees of Bombay, was the least gross of all idolatries—the one into which man first fell and was most prone to fall. The idolatry of this religion began with the worship, not of false gods, but of Jehovah, the one living and true God, under the symbols of the heavenly host. That, man's first declension and downward step, was one to warn us, but not much to wonder at. Even in these last days, with God's word in our hands, amid the full blaze of gospel light, we find it difficult to walk by faith and not by sight; and the eyes of devotees turned on cross and crucifix, the walls of churches crowded with images, prove how prone man is to lapse into a sensuous religion, and to seek by means of some visible object to fix his wandering thoughts and inflame his cold devotions. For this purpose the sun, moon and stars—especially the first of these—were chosen as images, visible symbols, of the invisible God. It was in this character that the sun, at least in the first instance, was worshiped. And certainly, if God was to be adored through symbols, none could be

found so appropriate as that imperial luminary, the ruler of the seasons, the source of all light and heat, the very life of Nature, which, clothing the forests anew each year with leaves, the pastures with grass and the fields with corn, resumes his daily course with unabating vigor, shows no sign of growth or of decay, and, throned in heaven, shines down from its azure heights with resplendent, dazzling glory.

This, the earliest, was certainly the least gross, of all idolatries. But that soon befell it which has happened to the images of the Roman Catholic and the pictures of the Greek Church. The sign came to usurp the place of the thing signified. Ere long it was not the Being symbolized, but the symbol itself, that was regarded as an object of adoration. And now, when the Church of Christ has her course to steer between Rationalism on this hand and Ritualism on that, let not the Bible only, but the history also of this earliest and least gross idolatry, warn her against setting much store on symbols, or leaning toward a sensuous worship. The tendency of every such worship is to become more sensuous, to depart farther and farther from the simplicity of the gospel.

It was out of the Sabean religion as well as out of Ur of the Chaldees that Abraham was called. The Jews and the Mohammedans also have curious legends about his conversion and the sufferings he had to endure for the truth. They say that when he was, according to some, fourteen, according to others, forty years of age, his mind took a religious turn. At this time observing a star when night overshadowed him, he said, "This is my Lord;" but keeping his eye on the luminary, and observing it sink ere long, he abandoned all faith in it, wisely remarking, "I like not gods which set." As the night wore on and left him in painful perplexity, the moon rose up in silver splendor. He turned to her, with the delighted exclamation, "This is my Lord." But following in the wake of the star, she also set, and when her bright rim dipped below the horizon, with her set his

faith in her divinity. By and by, from the purple East, the sun leapt up, illuminating the heavens with splendor and bathing the world in light. All his dark doubts now scattered with the morning mists before its beams. "This," exclaimed Abraham, throwing himself down to worship—"this is my Lord." But when hours had rolled on, the sun also began to sink, and when, following star and moon, it vanished from his gaze, old legends tell how Abraham rose from his knees to cast aside the faith of his fathers and worship Him who alone rules both in heaven and in earth.

Nor is this all these old legends tell us concerning Abraham on his being converted from idolatry. He is said to have taken advantage of the absence of his people to enter their temple, and sparing only the biggest of their idols, break all the rest in pieces. Discovering, on their return, the havoc which had been wrought, the people were roused to frenzy. They cried, "Who hath done this to our gods?" and on being told that it was Abraham, they exclaimed, "Bring him forth!" "Hast thou done this to our gods?" they said. "Nay," replied he in mockery—"nay; the biggest of them hath done it; but ask them." "Thou knowest," was their answer, "that these speak not." Abraham now had them in a corner. To this very point he had wished to lead them. So, turning on them, he demanded, "Do you then worship, besides God, that which cannot profit and cannot hurt you? Fie on you!" "Burn him!" burst from the lips of these early persecutors, these fathers of the Inquisition. And the old legends go on to tell how a fiery furnace was forthwith kindled, and how this bold witness for the truth was cast among the roaring flames, and how he came forth unhurt, God having spoken out of heaven, saying, "O fire, be thou cold, and a prevention unto my servant Abraham!"

The Bible is silent as to the manner and means and time of Abraham's conversion. But whatever these might be, the work was divine—wrought in his heart by Him who gave his servant

grace to rise at another call, and go forth, he knew not whither, an exile from his native land, to wander in a land of strangers. Let it be remarked that in whatever manner he was called and converted, his case presents a remarkable example of the sovereignty of divine grace. We are to remember that the true religion was not altogether extinct in Abraham's day. Like stars shining, one here and another there, through the clefts and openings of a cloudy sky, like those Alpine summits whose snows I have seen glowing in rosy sunlight when all the valleys lay wrapped in the sombre shades of evening, there were families at that time of general idolatry where God was worshiped not only in spirit, but in truth. Such was Job's, for instance. It is highly probable that he lived about the same period as Abraham. There is no allusion to be found in the Book which bears his name to any of those remarkable events which distinguished the exodus of Israel, and we may therefore conclude that his era was not coeval with that of Moses, but preceded it. But there are plain allusions in that Book to the Sabean worship, to the adoration of the heavenly bodies; and this makes it highly probable that Job lived about Abraham's time, and among those whose religion corresponded with that of his compatriots. While that is highly probable, this is certain—that Melchizedec, whom Abraham met, and to whom he paid tithes, was a worshiper of the true God, and that those among whom this mysterious personage filled the office of a priest must have been so likewise. Yet passing by these, God repairs to a family of idolaters, and out of them selects a man to be the father of his people and the great progenitor of his incarnate Son. Verily, his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. His grace is free as the wind that bloweth where it listeth; and here, as in many other cases of conversion which present most unlooked-for results, we see that "the first are last and the last are first." Abraham is a childless man, and God chooses him to be the father of a mighty nation; Abraham is an idolater, and God

appoints him conservator of true religion and the ancestor of the world's Redeemer. By this early as by many other signal acts of free, sovereign and almighty grace, how does God teach men never to despond or to despair! His way is in the sea and his path in the mighty waters; nor can we know what purposes he intends to serve by us, what usefulness may be ours, what honors may await us, to what blessings and blessed work we may be called. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord!"

## ABRAHAM'S TEMPER OR DISPOSITION.

In the aspect of his character, Abraham was more like Jesus Christ, stood nearer the most illustrious of his descendants, than perhaps any man—than any at least I have seen or have read of. What a contrast he offers to those sour, selfish, narrow-minded, mean, greedy, grasping, ill-tempered or ill-conditioned Christians who present religion in a repulsive rather than in an attractive aspect, ever reminding us of the saying, *The grace of God can dwell where neither you nor I could!*

Where, for example, shall we find such a pattern of courteousness as Abraham offers for our imitation? It is the noontide hour, when, in hot Southern lands, labor, which begins with the first blush of dawn, takes a pause and breathing-time. Abraham sits in his tent door enjoying its grateful shade, and looking out on the plain of Mamre, from which the sun's fiery beams have driven men, birds and panting beasts to such shelter as rocks and trees and tents afford. He descries three men approaching, making for his tent, toiling along under the broiling heat. Strangers, neither clansmen nor neighbors nor friends, they have no claim on him. He may wait their approach, leaving them to solicit his hospitality. Not he. Abraham rises—

nay, he runs to meet them; and mingling respect with kindness, courtly manners with the most benevolent intentions, he bows himself to the ground. Not one who says, *The favor which is worth the giving is worth the asking*, he anticipates their request and makes offer of his hospitality. But they may fear being burdensome to him. So, to remove any reluctance on their part to accept his kindness, he makes light of it, speaking of what he was about to offer as no tax on his generosity—as but "a morsel of bread." Nor is this all. With that delicate regard to others' feelings which true kindness prompts, he would make it appear that they will oblige him more by accepting than he does them by offering his hospitality. "My lord," he says, addressing him who appeared the chief man of the three—"my lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant; let a little water be fetched and wash your feet; and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on." And in a short while—for Sarah and the servants are hastily summoned from their different occupations to supply the wants of the strangers—the three are seated at an ample board, Abraham giving the finishing touch to his courtesy by respectfully standing beside his guests while they eat. Throughout the whole transaction, he presents a beautiful model of what was once understood by that excellent though now much misapplied term, "a gentleman." This is what every Christian should be. Modern use has greatly perverted the words *gentleman* and *gentlewoman* from their original and excellent meaning. What they indicate cannot be conveyed by a patent of nobility. It belongs to no rank. It is the ornament of the highest, and should be the ambition of the humblest. The temper and manners these terms express are compressed into the one brief exhortation of the apostle, "Be courteous." Courteousness is a Christian duty, and nowhere can a better example of it be found than in this story—the eight verses of Genesis which relate it containing a better lesson on

true politeness than the whole volume of Lord Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son."

Abraham's generosity—a still higher virtue—is equally remarkable. In proof of that, look to the manner in which he treated Lot, his nephew. Early deprived of a parent's care, fatherless, if not also motherless, Lot is, I may say, adopted by Abraham—received into his nest, taken under his sheltering wing. Not so unhappy as some who have had no other return for such kindness as he rendered Lot than the basest, blackest ingratitude, whose lives have been embittered and their bosoms stung by those they had kindly nursed, still Abraham's connection with Lot cost him much care and trouble. Quarrels soon arose between their servants, and matters at length came to this pass—that they must part. Now, there can be no doubt that Lot lay under the strongest obligations to Abraham. It was his part to accept his uncle's judgment in this juncture, and leave to his decision their separate paths in life. The patriarch had been a father to him—a friend kinder than many fathers. Besides, Abraham was the elder of the two, and also the greater of the two; more than that, the land of Canaan, which was Lot's only by sufferance, was his by promise. Abraham might have said to Lot, "You have no right whatever to this land—to a foot of it; go in peace, but seek your portion elsewhere. Such is my decision, and, remember, I have power to enforce it." Yet the uncle generously bestows on the nephew a share of his own property; more than that, as if he was the younger and also the weaker of the two—as if the land of Canaan had been promised to the other rather than to him—as if he had been the party who had received rather than conferred favors—in determining their respective positions, Abraham leaves the choice to Lot. He will take Lot's leavings. "Let there be no strife, I pray thee," says this right noble man, "between me and thee. We be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, I will go to

the left." What self-denial, self-control, self-sacrifice, in that speech! What liberal and magnanimous generosity his! What a model of a Christian this man!

Men often do wrong by insisting on their rights. Far be that from Abraham! He seeks not his own, but the things of others, and here offers one of the costliest sacrifices ever laid on the altar of peace. This sacrifice, be it remarked and remembered, did not go without its reward. Abraham found it, as, I cannot doubt, he very sensibly and very gratefully felt, on that eventful morning when, standing on Bethel's rocky heights, he turned his gaze from the plain—Lot's choice—all smoking like a burning furnace, to the green hills around dotted with his flocks, to his herds safely browsing on the dewy pastures, and to the tents below, where his family were reposing beneath the shadow of the shield of God, every head laid on its pillow of sweet sleep and peace. Still, as then, let me add, good men will, and shall sooner or later, profit by every sacrifice they make for peace. Let us "seek peace and pursue it."

But never did Abraham, or any one else, present a finer model of disinterested generosity and true nobility of mind than he, amid scenes that usually inflame the worst and most selfish passions of our nature. He stands on a field strewn with the ghastly dead; the air is filled with the shouts of conquerors and the groans of captives; a rich spoil lies scattered at his feet; his cheek is still red with the flush and his sword with the blood of battle; and his bearing there offers an example of one of those bright gleams which occasionally relieve the horrors and gild the lurid clouds of war. A man of peace, the battle was not of his seeking. But the news had reached his tents that Lot and his family are prisoners. The tidings awaken all his old affections. His trumpet sounds to arms. Lot must be rescued. With more than three hundred retainers following his banner, he pushes on at their head, overtakes the foe, and throwing himself on their ranks, achieves a surprise, a rescue and a signal victory. By the

rights of war, the spoil, at least the greater part of it, falls to him, and therefore the king of Sodom, content to get back his subjects, and perhaps the captives to boot, says, "Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself." He might have done so. Many would have done so—all, indeed, who, taking advantage of forms of law, and regardless of justice, gratitude and the claims of others, insist on their legal rights. Not so did Abraham. What a rebuke his conduct administers to such mean and mercenary spirits! What an example his of that high Christian principle that sets humanity and justice above mere legal claims —the law of God, in fact, above the law of man—and scorns to touch what the latter may through its imperfections grant, but a higher law, the Golden Rule, "As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye also unto them," forbids a man to take! With a single eye to the glory of God and the just claims of the unfortunate, Abraham gives up his legal rights, and to the king of Sodom returns this magnanimous answer: "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Here is a pattern to copy. Playing as high-minded a part as this grand old patriarch, equally well illustrating the Christian maxim, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," how would we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour!

The tenderness of Abraham's heart is as remarkable as the loftiness, purity and sternness of his virtue. Sodom was a sink of iniquity. Abraham could not but know that, and could not but hold the habits of its people in unutterable abhorrence. Yet see how he mourns its doom, regarding its sinners with such pity as filled the eyes of Jesus, and drew from his heart this lamentable cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" There have been men, even women,

who went sternly to the work of executing God's judgments—cutting away the foul cancer from the breast of society with unflinching nerves, with an eye that knew no pity and a hand that did not spare. "Blessed above women," sung Deborah, "shall Jael, the wife of Heber, be. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer, and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head; so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." What a contrast to that strong iron heart the tenderness of Abraham's! Sodom awakens all his pity. Considerations of its enormous guilt are swallowed up in the contemplation of its impending doom. Truest, tenderest type of his own illustrious Son, with the spirit that dropped in the tears and flows in the blood of Jesus, he casts himself between God's anger and the guilty city. He asks, he pleads, he prays for mercy—not that the righteous only be saved, but that the wicked be spared for the sake of the righteous. In his anxiety to save their lives he imperils his own—stands in the way, braves and encounters the danger of turning the Avenger's sword on himself. Once and again and again he puts God's long-suffering patience to the trial. He detains him—keeps him listening to new pleas and requests. Like the gallant crew who, moved by the sight of drowning wretches that hang in the shrouds and stretch out their hands for help, after repeated failures to make the wreck, venture life-boat and lives once more amid the roaring breakers, Abraham cries, "Oh, let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once; peradventure ten shall be found there."

Like some tall mountain whose top catches the beams of the morning sun ere he rises on the lower hills and sleeping homesteads of the winding valleys, this patriarch, as he saw Christ's day, seems to have caught Christ's spirit, afar off. Surely his was the spirit of Christ—that mind of which it is said, "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Compassion, pity, love for sinners, than these there is no surer mark

and test of true religion. May they be found in us as in Jesus Christ!—as in Abraham!—as in him, perhaps the greatest of all the patriarch's merely human descendants, who, penetrated with compassion for his guilty, unhappy countrymen, wrote, "I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness, that I have great heaviness and sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren."

## ABRAHAM'S FAITH AND PIETY.

In a clear wintry night, when planets, constellations and all the orbs of heaven are sparkling through the frosty air, we see how, as Paul says, "one star differeth from another star in glory." But though some are larger and much more luminous than others, which, now caught, now lost, seem but points of light, not a few appear equally brilliant. Of these rivals that are flaming and wheeling in different quarters of the firmament, it were hard to say which is pre-eminent—the biggest, brightest gem in the dusky crown of night. This difficulty is one we do not meet on opening the Bible at the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. With examples of faith extending all the way down from the remote days of Abel to those last times, when the saints of God were stoned and sawn asunder, tempted and slain with the sword, it presents a bright and glorious spectacle. We gaze on that firmament, if I may so speak, which shines above the Church through the long dark night of time, and which, as the night wears on, grows more and more resplendent with those whom God is calling up to shine in heaven as the stars for ever and ever. History contains no catalogue of equally illustrious names. It relates no such famous deeds as stand recorded in that grand chapter. But though these stars of the Church resemble those of the material heavens in this, that one differeth from another in glory, they differ in this, on the other hand, that for the power, grandeur and, in whatever aspect indeed it be regarded, for the greatness of his faith, the severity of its trial and the bril-

liancy of its triumphs, Abraham shines pre-eminent. He has no equal, no rival. To change the figure, he holds such pre-eminence among these grand exemplars of trust in God and faith in his unfailing word as does the centre mountain among the group above whose rocky pinnacles and snow-clad summits it rears its imperial dome.

Compare Abraham with some, or with any one, of the worthies whose names are embalmed in that chapter. Take Moses. "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?" he said. With the rod in his hand that he had already seen changed into a living serpent, and that was hereafter to change rivers into blood and the bed of ocean into dry land, Moses shrank from the dangerous task; he hesitated, conjuring up difficulties and urging objections till the divine anger was kindled against him. Take Gideon. "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?" he cries. "Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." And saying so, there he stands on the threshing-floor, nor leaves it for a nobler sphere till miracles strengthen and sustain his faith—till a bowlful of water is wrung from the fleece around which all the ground lay dry, and on another morning the fleece lies dry on meadows sparkling with dew, by bushes hung thick with diamonds. And to mention but one other, though not the least, of the worthies enrolled in that chapter, take David. See how he staggers beneath his load! Look at him repairing for safety and shelter to the Philistines, as if God had ever given to his enemies occasion for the taunt, "Where is now thy God?" Yet trusting them rather than Him who had delivered him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear and the hand of the giant champion whom he encountered with no other weapon than sling and pebble, he flies to the country of the Philistines and throws himself into their arms, distrusting God, and crying, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

Look now at Abraham's faith! It stood the test of much severer trials. He is called to leave his country and his kin-

dred—called to go he knew not where—called to be he knew not what. Nor does he hesitate. He instantly responds, repairs to Canaan, and lives and dies in the confident belief that it shall belong to him and to his. Yet he found no place there to rest the sole of his foot—his weary foot—but was tossed about during a long lifetime here and there, like a sea-weed which is floated hither and thither on the wandering billows, cast on the shore by this tide and swept away by that. Looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, the life of all believers is more or less one of faith. But of Abraham and his whole life in the land of Canaan, of every journey he undertook, every march he made, and every footprint he left on its soil or on its sands, it might be literally as well as figuratively said—it was true of him in respect of this world as well as of the next as it never was of any other man—"He walked by faith and not by sight."

This faith culminates on Moriah—the mount where, laying Isaac on the altar, it endures its greatest trial and achieves its greatest triumph. It furnishes the only key to the questions that rise unbidden as we read the story—a fond and doting father, how could Abraham undertake the task? how was he able to contemplate imbruing his hands in the blood of his son? how did his reason withstand the shock? how did his heart not break? how had he nerve to disclose the dreadful truth to Isaac, to kiss him, to bind his naked limbs, to draw the knife from its sheath and raise his arm for the blow? how did not the cords of life snap under the strain, and Abraham, spared the horrid sacrifice, fall dead on the altar—a pitiful sight, a father clasping within his lifeless arms the beloved form of his son? It is by the power of faith he stands there, the knife glittering in his hand, his arm raised to strike—the conqueror of Nature. The blow shall make him childless, yet he believes that he shall be the father of a mighty nation; that when the flames have consumed the loved form at his side, Isaac shall rise from their ashes; and that after

this bloody tragedy and greatest act of worship, with Isaac restored to his arms, as they climbed, they shall descend, the mount together. Who can help exclaiming, "O Abraham, great is thy faith!"

Yet the patriarch had his failings—as who has not?—and they are written to warn him "who thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall." "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee," asks the prophet, "canst thou contend with horsemen?" Yet, strange to say, though Abraham contended successfully in the race with horsemen, distancing them all, he was outstripped by footmen. He trusted God to restore the life of his son, yet did not trust him to protect the honor of his wife. Telling a lie about Sarah, he failed in the very grace for which he was most distinguished. Should not these things teach us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, and never under any circumstances to forget the warning, "Be not high-minded, but fear"? When Nehemiah, bold as a lion, said, "Shall such a man as I flee?" how much more might we have expected such a man as Abraham to say, "Shall such a man as I lie?" His faith failed him. This great and venerable patriarch stands convicted of a mean equivocation. And who that sees him vainly trying to gloss over his shame can help exclaiming, "Lord, what is man?" Surely the best and worst of men have but one refuge—the blood and righteousness of Jesus.

Another practical and equally important remark we may draw from Abraham's history, ere he leaves the stage to give place to his servant, whom we shall next introduce. Paul explains the patriarch's pre-eminent triumph by his pre-eminent faith. But what explains *it?* What fed the faith wherein his great strength lay? Challenging comparison with any, and excelling all, in that grace, we may justly apply to him the glowing terms and bold figures of the prophet: "He was a cedar in Lebanon, with high stature and fair branches and shadowing shroud—the cedars of God could not hide him—the fir trees were not like his boughs,

and the chestnut trees were not like his branches, nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him for beauty: his root," he adds, explaining how this cedar towered above the loftiest trees, giant monarch of the forest—"his root was by the great waters." And what that root found in streams which, fed by the snows and seaming the sides of Lebanon, hottest summers never dried and coldest winters never froze, the unequaled faith of Abraham found in close and constant communion with God. Like Enoch, he walked with God. Each important transaction of life was entered on in a pious spirit and hallowed by religious exercises. His tent was a moving temple; his household was a pilgrim church. Wherever he rested, whether by the venerable oak of Mamre, or on the olive slopes of Hebron, or on the lofty, forest-crowned ridge of Bethel, an altar rose, and his prayers went up with its smoke to heaven. Such daily intimate and loving communion did this grand saint maintain with heaven that God calls him his "friend;" and honoring his faith with a higher than any earthly title, the Church has crowned him "Father of the Faithful." He lived on terms of fellowship with God such as had not been seen since the days of Eden. Voices addressed him from the skies, angels paid visits to his tent, and visions of celestial glory hallowed his lowly couch and mingled with his nightly dreams. He was a man of prayer, and therefore he was a man of power. Setting us an example that we should follow his steps, thus, to revert to language borrowed from the stateliest of Lebanon's cedars—thus was he "fair in his greatness and in the length of his branches, for his root was by the great waters."

# IV.

## ELIEZER.[1]

THE French have established a *diligence* that starts from the seacoast at Beyrout, and now climbing the steeps and now winding through the picturesque valleys of Lebanon, descends after a long day's journey on the city of Damascus. This city is a point of interest to every traveler who visits the Holy Land; nor any wonder, since there are points not a few in which it claims pre-eminence over any other place in the world.

Akin to the veneration with which the men of his day regarded Methuselah, hoar with the snows of nine hundred sixty and nine years—with which we ourselves should gaze on the oldest living man, which I felt on looking even on the ruins of a decayed but living yew that, a sapling at the date of David's battle with Goliah, was a great tree, mantled in the mists or white with the snows of our hills, that winter night the Saviour was born—akin to this is the feeling with which an intelligent and thoughtful traveler must tread the streets of Damascus. Said by Josephus to have been founded by a great-grandson of Noah, and certainly spreading along the banks of Abana at the time Abraham entered the land of Canaan, Damascus is the oldest existing inhabited city of the world. Of all those that were coeval with it, it only stands. The hand of Time, committing its ravages less suddenly but no less surely than the flood that swept away Enoch, the first

[1] Guthrie.

city, as it did Eden, the first garden in the world, has left no other memorial of these than their names in the page of history or some desolate and lonely ruin. It is not so with Damascus. Long anterior to the building either of Athens or of Rome it was a busy city, and, sole survivor of a remote antiquity, it is a busy city still. How great its age! It boasts of streets along which the tide of human life has ebbed and flowed for nearly four thousand years. Were the title one which could be properly applied to any place but heaven, not Rome, but Damascus, should be called "The Eternal City."

Singularly interesting to antiquaries on account of its extreme antiquity, this city presents also features of peculiar interest to men engaged in the pursuits of trade, whether they be the arts of peace or war they cultivate. Famous during long ages for its silk manufactures, it gives its own name to a fabric which is esteemed of superior richness and value—*damask* being called so from the circumstance that it was invented in Damascus and first woven in its looms. Its weapons of steel were even more famous than its webs of silk. Happy the man in battle who carried a Damascus blade, no other place forging swords of such exquisite temper. I know not but probably the Bible alludes to the superior excellence of these where it says, "Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?" I once happened to see this steel put to the test. It was in France, and in the chemistry class of the Sorbonne. In the course of a lecture on iron, Thenard, the professor, produced a Damascus blade, stating that he believed that these swords owed their remarkable temper to the iron of which they were made being smelted by the charcoal of a thorn-bush that grew in the desert. To put it to the trial, he placed the sword in the hand of a very powerful man, his assistant, desiring him to strike it with all his might against a bar of iron. With the arm of a giant the assistant sent the blade flashing around his head, and then down on the iron block, into which, when I expected to see it shivered like glass, it embedded

itself, quivering but uninjured, giving, besides a remarkable proof of the trustworthiness of the sword, new force to the proverb, *True as steel.*

But Damascus, which her poets dignify with the title of "Pearl of the East," presents attractive charms to travelers that have no stake in trade and feel no interest in antiquarian studies; for besides being the oldest, it is in some of its aspects the most beautiful, of cities. With its white towers and minarets shooting up through the groves of green palms into the transparent air, it lies within sight of the snow-crowned Hermon, reposing at the feet of a grand mountain-range, and encircled by a zone of gardens and of orchards of variously-tinted foliage and the finest fruits. Its plain is watered by Abana and Pharpar. These rivers, reckoned by the Syrian leper better than all the waters of Israel, rush forth from their mountain-gorges to be parted into a thousand streams, which, foaming onward, dance and sparkle in bright sunshine, and cover the soil on their banks with a carpet of flowery verdure. No city in the world is more, perhaps none so much, worthy of the encomium which the pride and patriotism of the Jews pronounced on their Jerusalem, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Travelers have used the most glowing terms and exhausted the powers of language in their attempts to describe its charms, but no expressions can give us so vivid an idea of them as the part Mohammed acted when, a camel-driver traversing the neighboring mountains, he stood in the gorge where the city first burst on his view. Rapt for a while in astonishment, he gazed on the wondrous scene, but by and by recovered himself; and fearing, should he venture down into the city, that its charms would seduce him into forgetting the vast schemes of his life, he turned aside and passed on, saying, with a self-denial and determination of purpose Christians would do well to imitate, *Man can have but one paradise, and mine is fixed above.*

Legends also cling to Damascus and the places around which

invest them with no ordinary interest. The origin and foundation of the city are lost in the mists of ages, but there is a common belief that he who looks on its lovely plain sees the cradle of the human race, and that it was from its red clay soil that God formed the first man, and also gave him his name of Adam, which is, being interpreted, *red clay*. If this is true, it imparts an air of probability to another of their legends—this, namely, that it was near Damascus that Abel fell a victim to his brother's envy, and his blood went up to heaven for vengeance on earth's first, if not worst, murderer. Here, on one of the mountain heights to the west of the city, is the place, it is said, where Abraham stood on that eventful day when, following with anxious eye the setting course of star and moon and sun, he abandoned their worship for that of the true God; and there, down on the plain in yonder vast mound, is the sepulchre of Nimrod—that mighty hunter before the Lord, who, as the founder of Babel, looms so large through the mists of four thousand years, the first of earth's old great monarchs.

These traditions, however interesting, may possibly be mere fancies, although in a sackful of such legends there are almost always some grains of truth. But though these were ranked with the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," there are facts associated with Damascus which, after Bethlehem and Jerusalem, invest it with greater sacredness than any other spot on earth. It is interesting as the home of Naaman the Syrian—he who, advised by a captive girl that had compassion on her master, repaired to Israel and lost both his pride and leprosy in the waters of the Jordan. It is interesting as the city from whose gates the proud armies marched forth over which God wrought some of his greatest triumphs on behalf of his ancient people, striking that host of a sudden with blindness, and this with such a panic that with Benhadad at their head, and two-and-thirty allied princes swelling the rout, they fled like sheep before a handful of the warriors of Israel. It is interesting to the students

of Scripture through its association with the two greatest of the prophets. Probably Elijah, but certainly Elisha, walked its street. God had sent him there; and there he unveiled such a future of crime and cruelty before Hazael, that, hardened sinner as the soldier was, he started in horror from his own image, exclaiming, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But what especially makes Damascus interesting and "holy ground" is, that it formed the scene of an event which, in its influence on the world, takes rank next to the birth and death of the Son of God. It was nigh to this city the great apostle of the Gentiles was converted. And what man occupies such a place in sacred history as he?—did so much in his lifetime, or has done so much by his writings, to proclaim and propagate the gospel? This "chief of sinners," as he humbly, penitently called himself, was unquestionably the chief of apostles—in writings, as in labors and in trials, more abundant than them all. Next to Jesus Christ, whose "name is as ointment poured forth," and than whose there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved, no name on earth, in the homes of the godly, is such a "household word" as Paul's; and in heaven, next to our Redeemer, I can believe him to be regarded with more universal interest than any one else in glory. How many have his pleadings moved! how many hearts have the arrows from his quiver pierced! to how many have his words brought life and comfort! and how many hearts, strengthened thereby, have entered the dark valley singing his own grand song, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ"! There the light shone that paled a noonday sun, and the darkness fell that issued in quenchless light, and Jesus last visited our world to convert his greatest persecutor into his greatest preacher. For these reasons Damascus will ever be among the sacred places which a Christian would like to visit.

The reputed birthplace of Adam, and certainly the spiritual birthplace of Paul, perhaps the greatest of his sons, this city gave birth to another man, of whom, and of whose remarkable virtues, it has no reason to be ashamed. Domestic servants form a very large, a very useful, and a very important class in society, and it can boast of having given birth to one who occupies a place of as great pre-eminence among them as Paul perhaps did in the apostleship of the Church. And so, appreciating the higher virtues, however humble the sphere be which they adorn, more than for its beauty of situation, more than for its famous fabrics, more than for its hoar antiquity, I regard Damascus with interest as the birthplace of him whose name stands at the head of this chapter—the steward of Abraham's house: as his own master calls him, "This Eliezer of Damascus."

Consider his position in life. He was a servant. He belonged to a class which the Bible highly honors, and by which it should be highly honored in return. Gratitude for the estimation in which it holds those whom many despise, and for the elevation to which it has raised some whom it found treated as slaves and trodden in the dust, requires that. The oldest and best of books, this Book, for the rules it supplies for this life and the hopes it presents of a better one, is adapted to all classes of society, and should be equally valued by all. This was well expressed by two very different but both impressive scenes. There in yonder palace, where a royal lady, about to leave our shores and rise in time to the position of a queen, receives a deputation. They have come to offer her, in the name of the women of our country, a parting marriage gift. It is no costly ornament, fashioned of gold and flashing with precious gems—diamonds from Indian mines or pearls from the deep—such as the wealth and willingness of the donors could have purchased. A healthy sign of the age and a noble testimony to its religious character, the gift is a copy of the Holy Scriptures—this, as in long centuries hence it will be told, was the marriage gift it was thought

worthy of a Christian nation to bestow, and worthy of a royal princess to receive. And there also, on yon stormy shore, where, amid the wreck the night had wrought, and the waves, still thundering as they sullenly retire, had left on the beach, lies the naked form of a drowned sailor-boy. He had stripped for one last brave fight for life, and wears naught but a handkerchief bound round his cold breast. Insensible to pity, and unawed by the presence of death, those who sought the wreck as vultures swoop down on their prey, rushed on the body and tore away the handkerchief—tore it open, certain that it held within its folds gold—his little fortune; something very valuable for a man in such an hour to say, "I'll sink or swim with it." They were right. But it was not gold. It was the poor lad's Bible—also a parting gift, and the more precious that it was a mother's.

Equally suited for a royal princess and a cabin-boy, and all indeed upward from the broad base to the apex of the social pyramid, the Bible deserves to be held in higher esteem by no class than by servants. There is none in the world on which it bestows a higher honor, to whom indeed it addresses a call so high and noble—it being to servants, or rather, (for such were most of those whom he addressed,) to slaves—to them it says, "Adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour." He who so orders his life and conversation as to bring no dishonor or reproach on religion, who gives no occasion to its enemies to blaspheme, nor by his falls and inconsistencies furnishes scandals to be told in Gath and published in the streets of Ashkelon, does well. He may thank God that amid life's slippery paths he has prayed, nor prayed in vain, "Hold up my goings that my footsteps slip not." He does better still in whose life religion presents itself less in a negative and more in a positive form. For while it is well to depart from evil, it is better to do good; nor does he live in vain who exemplifies by his daily life and conversation the pure, and virtuous, and holy, and beneficent, and sublime, and saving, doctrines of God his Saviour. The first is good, the

second is better, but the last is best of all. So to live as to be beautiful as well as living epistles of Jesus Christ, seen and read of all men—so to live as to recommend the truth to the admiration and love of others—so to live as to constrain them to say, "What a good and blessed thing is true religion!"—as in some measure to win the encomium of her who, looking on Jesus, exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!" so to live, in fact, as to resemble those books which, in addition to their proper contents, are bound in gold, are illuminated and illustrated with paintings, or those pillars which, while like their plainer neighbors supporting the superstructure, are also its ornaments, rising gracefully from the floor in fluted columns and crowned with wreaths of flowers,—this is best of all.

A Christian can aspire no higher. And let it be remembered that for a work so sacred Paul singles out servants. It is not kings on their thrones, nor lords in their castles, nor high dignitaries of Church or State, but these, the humble occupants of the kitchen, the sun-browned laborers of the cottage and fields, whom he calls, not merely to exemplify or illustrate, but to *adorn*, the doctrine of God their Saviour. Let others respect them; any way, let servants respect themselves. Such honor have not all his saints. Ample compensation this for what the world regards as their humble position—as it were to the lark, could she be dissatisfied with her grassy nest, to think that though no singing bird has such a lowly home, none soar so high as she, or sing so near to the gates of heaven. Eliezer belonged to this class, and is a grand pattern to all servants who are seeking through grace to fulfill their high calling and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. It will be my aim to set him forth in this light as we proceed. Meanwhile, I go on to show that his condition in life was below even that of a servant, as we understand the term. My object in this is not to detract from, but rather add to, our admiration of the man, such a circumstance being calculated to

bring out his merits all the more plainly, as the dark cloud on which they are painted does the colors of a rainbow, or its foil the brilliancy of a precious gem.

Servants, in our sense of the term, are those whose skill, time and labor are their own property. Disposing of these for a longer or shorter period at their own free will, and as they judge most to their advantage, they belong to themselves, and need call no man master unless they choose and as they choose. The few excepted who, having inherited or acquired a fortune, are independent of the gains of labor, there is hardly any class that enjoys such an amount of freedom as domestic servants. Few, on the whole, are so well off; and when servants sufficiently appreciate the advantages they enjoy under a kind Christian roof, none have more occasion, from a sense of gratitude to God, so to demean themselves and discharge the duties of their calling as to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour." With wages adequate to their present and, unless wasted on vanity, to their prospective wants, found in food and many of the comforts of life, they enjoy freedom from cares that press on the heads of the house, and may sing at their work like birds who have their wants supplied, though they neither sow nor reap. Their business binds down many other classes to one spot, as their roots do the trees to the soil; but servants enjoy a freedom approaching that of the denizens of the air—"The world is all before them, where to choose."

The fisherman is bound to the seashore, the shepherd to the lonely hills, the ploughman to the glebe, the merchant to the busy town, lawyers to the neighborhood of courts, shopkeepers are nailed to their counters, pastors have to move, as they should shine, within the orbits of their congregations, and thousands of our artisans, panting to breathe fresh air and gladden their eyes with green fields, have to live amid the smoke of furnaces and the ceaseless roar of machinery. Many are, but many more may be called, slaves to business. So unlike slavery, however, is the

condition of our servants, that numbers of them acquire the restless habits of the nomade races, of gypsies or Tartars. They roam from one situation to another, shifting with every shifting term—an abuse of their liberty much to be regretted. Reducing the value of character and leading to license of life and manners, this habit proves most unfavorable both to their moral and material interests, presenting, in a class in whose welfare all should take a kind and Christian interest, too many illustrations of the proverb, "*A rolling stone gathers no moss.*"

Eliezer had no such opportunities of abusing liberty. He was not a servant in our sense of the term. As Abraham's other servants—and indeed almost all servants in those days were—he was a slave; and that such was the true condition of the patriarch's servants is plainly indicated by what is told us of the three hundred armed followers whom he summoned to his standard on hastening to the rescue of Lot—this, namely, that they "were born in his own house." It proves nothing to the contrary that this man, holding a high place in his master's house, was one whom Abraham trusted with his confidence, whom he employed in important domestic affairs, and whom, indeed, he at one time probably intended to constitute his heir. It was not an uncommon thing in those days, when slavery was a comparatively mild and gentle servitude, for such as had been bought and sold to rise in the changes of Fortune from the bottom to the very top of her wheel. Witness Esther's romantic and splendid history. And to take a case in some respects parallel to that of Eliezer, we know that he did not hold a more respectable and responsible office in the house of Abraham than Joseph held in that of Potiphar. "Behold," he said, in answer to the solicitations of the temptress, "my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I: neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Still,

Joseph, this paragon of virtue, the man who has associated his name with the highest recorded example of untarnished purity and truest honor, was a slave; nor is there any reason to suppose that Eliezer occupied in Abraham's household a better position than Joseph did in Potiphar's, who was bought of the Ishmaelites, and—shame to say it!—had been bought by them of his own brothers.

We defend no slavery, but abhor all kinds of it, be it domestic, political, ecclesiastical or spiritual. May God break every yoke! Yet be it observed that while Eliezer was in a condition of servitude, his—that of patriarchal times—was no such servitude as in our days has produced the most revolting cruelties and unutterable crimes. Then, as is manifest to any one who reads the books of Moses, the system of bondage—not established by God, but only tolerated among his ancient people—had the usual severities of slavery so ameliorated, had the abuses it is liable to so carefully restrained, and had its term in ordinary circumstances so limited, that to quote it either as a sanction or defence of modern slavery is wickedly to confound things that widely differ. At the same time, I may remark that while God, so to speak, winked at slavery—as at a plurality of wives, and other customs opposed to the spirit of the gospel—in these early times, we see in the very infancy of the system evidences of its essentially vicious character. Hercules is said to have strangled serpents, but it strangled virtue in its cradle. Among those quiet pastoral scenes where Jacob's sons, steeling their hearts against his cries and entreaties, sell their brother, and in those tented homes, far from the pollution and barefaced vice of cities, where Sarah and Leah and Rachel dispose, as if they were cattle, of the bodies of their handmaids, we see the cropping out of a system which has everywhere blighted and blasted and rudely trampled on the freedom of man and the virtue of woman. It has been fully developed since then. Look at it under the most favorable circumstances. Examine the fruits it has borne even in what

may be called a Christian soil. See fathers selling their children, and worse still, debauching their own daughters; women tied naked to the whipping-post, and while they writhe under the bloody lash, filling the air and heaven itself with their agonizing cries; virgin modesty openly scorned; all female virtue and manly respect crushed out of humanity; the black man degraded into a brute, and the white man changed into a monster! And was not a system which thus, deepening the degradation and aggravating the curse of the fall, defeated the blessed ends for which God's Son descended on a ruined world, well named by Wesley *the sum of all villanies?* It was next to blaspheming the name of God for its apologists and abettors—some of them, alas! ministers of the gospel—to pretend that it had any sanction in the Bible, or speak of Eliezer's gentle, noble, virtuous, generous and saintly master as that "good old slaveholder, Abraham." Happily, there is no temptation now to call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet, good evil, and evil good. We and our brethren in England are done with this great crime, but unhappily neither of us, it would seem, with its consequences, though we paid a heavy penalty, and they a heavier, the stain that dimmed the lustre of their banner-stars not being washed out but in a sea of blood.

In making these remarks, which have been suggested by the case of Eliezer, I freely admit that there were cases—not a few cases perhaps—where the natural results of slavery were much modified, if not altogether neutralized—cases where masters, deploring the existence of what they did not establish and could not abolish, ruled with a gentle hand, and holding themselves responsible to God for the duties of their position, won the regards and reigned in the hearts of their slaves. And ruling like Abraham, such men found among that despised and downtrodden race—whom some of our so-called philosophers regard, and it is no breach of charity to believe would, had they the power, treat, as little better than brutes—examples of affection to

their master and of fidelity to their trust not inferior to that of Eliezer of Damascus. Before I proceed to his character, I would give one example, asking those who read it to consider if kindness, sympathy with their circumstances, forbearance with their faults, interest in their welfare, and courteous and Christian treatment could produce such a noble character out of negro slaves, how many such might they not produce among our domestic servants?

On the deck of a foundering vessel stood a negro slave. The last man left on board, he was about to step into the life-boat. She was already laden almost to the gunwale, to the water-edge. Bearing in his arms what seemed a heavy bundle, the boat's crew, who with difficulty kept her afloat in the roaring sea, refused to receive him. If he came, it must be unencumbered and alone. On that they insisted. He must either leave the bundle and leap in, or throw it in and stay to perish. Pressing it to his bosom, he opened its folds, and there, warmly wrapped, lay two little children whom their father had committed to his care. He kissed them, and bade the sailors carry his affectionate farewell to his master, telling him how faithfully he had fulfilled his charge. Then lowering the children into the boat, which pushed off, the dark man stood alone on the deck, to go down with the sinking ship, a noble example of bravery and true fidelity and the "love that seeketh not its own."

I lately turned to the census of Great Britain, to see what light it would throw on my remark that servants are not only a very important, but also a very numerous, class of the community. With the exception of agricultural out-door laborers, who amounted in 1851 to 1,077,627, there is no class so numerous. The tables, which, not excepting her Majesty from their lists, give one queen, give 1,000,000 and more of servants, as follows:

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| Servants, domestic (general) | 754,926 |
| Coachmen | 7,579 |
| Cooks | 48,806 |
| Gardeners | 5,052 |
| Grooms | 16,194 |
| Housekeepers | 50,574 |
| Housemaids | 55,935 |
| Nurses | 39,139 |
| Inn-servants | 60,586 |
| | 1,038,791 |

In the light of this prodigious number, of the fact that within Great Britain there were in 1851 more than ONE MILLION of domestic servants—a mass certainly not diminished but increased during the last fifteen years—the subject of this chapter assumes an aspect of immense importance. In this view, the pattern of a good servant presents an object, if not of higher, of wider and much more general, interest than even that of a good sovereign. And such a pattern we have, as I now proceed to set forth, in Abraham's steward—as his master called him, in "this Eliezer of Damascus."

Other stones besides the keystone go to form an arch, but without it, though formed of solid granite, they are useless—no better, be they two or two hundred, than as many cobwebs, to sustain a building or to span a roaring river. Locking all the rest together, it is the keystone that gives their value to the others. Take it away, and they become a mass of useless rubbish. Now, such is the virtue which we assign to *fidelity* among the qualifications that form a good servant, and fit any one, whether filling a public or private sphere, for a position of trust. The truthfulness that scorns to resort to an equivocation or tell a lie, the honesty that would not defraud another of the value of a pin, the fidelity, in one word, that, with a single eye to a master's interest is as diligent and dutiful out of his sight as in it, behind his back as before his face,—this is the first and greatest property of a good servant—one, indeed, that in the judgment of every reasonable

and considerate master will make amends for many faults, and be like the "charity that covereth a multitude of sins."

The very long period—to apply these remarks to Eliezer—during which he held the important office of steward in Abraham's house, proves that he possessed this quality in an eminent degree. Though frequent change of place, in some instances, may be more a servant's misfortune than his fault, it is not without reason that a long period of service is regarded as the best proof of fitness and fidelity; for though mere talent, or a happy stroke of fortune, may raise a man or woman to a position of trust, it is only by trustworthiness that they can keep it. Some shift at almost every term, floating about in society like seaweed, the wrack of ocean that changes its place on the shore at every tide; but Eliezer grew gray in the same house, and held the same office for at least fifty years. He was steward before Isaac was born, and still steward when Isaac was married—two events separated by nearly half a century. In this point of view he should be regarded as a pattern servant—a model it were as much for the interests of servants as of their masters they more frequently copied. True to his earthly, as we all should be to our heavenly, Master, Eliezer was a "good and *faithful* servant," and this, which his long possession of office demonstrates, is beautifully illustrated by an interesting chapter in Abraham's history.

No man in the Bible plays a more high-minded and honorable part than Eliezer, though a servant, and in one sense a slave. Fully to comprehend that and appreciate his fidelity, it must be remembered that the birth of Isaac, though a happy event to Abraham and Sarah, was far otherwise, in a worldly point of view, to him. It inflicted a blow on Eliezer which it needed uncommon magnanimity and piety to bear. Till Isaac appeared, this man had good hopes of succeeding to his master's fortune. Such is the way I read, and the meaning I attach to, these words of Abraham: "I go childless, and the steward of my house is

this Eliezer of Damascus. Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and lo, one born in my house is mine heir"—this Eliezer, one of my slaves, or a child of his. This, no doubt, supposes that, in lack of offspring by Sarah, Abraham intended to set aside Lot, his nephew, and also his relatives in Mesopotamia—a resolution which, to those who are ignorant of Eastern habits, may seem unlikely, almost incredible. But it was not so in Abraham's age, nor is it so still in those regions of the world where he lived, and where events are frequently occurring to produce a strong impression of the fact that it is God who setteth up one and putteth down another. There the revolutions of the wheel of fortune are as strange as sudden—raising, as we read in the book of Esther, a beautiful slave to share his bed and throne with the king of Persia, and taking a man from the gate where he was a porter, and even from the foot of a gallows, to make him the first minister of state. In illustration of that, hear what Forbes says: "It is still the custom in India, especially among the Mohammedans, that in default of children, and sometimes where there are lineal descendants, the master of a family adopts a slave, frequently a half-Abyssinian of the darkest hue, for his heir. He educates him agreeably to his wishes, and marries him to one of his daughters. As the reward of superior merit, or to suit the caprice of an arbitrary despot, this honor is also conferred on a slave recently purchased or already grown up in the family, and to him he bequeaths his wealth in preference to his nephews or any collateral branches. This is a custom of great antiquity in the East, and prevalent among the most refined and civilized nations."

But the bright prospects which this custom and the future opened to Eliezer vanished at the birth of Isaac. We cannot doubt that he bore his disappointment nobly, and for his dear master's sake welcomed and even loved the boy who had come between him and a splendid fortune. And yet one hope may still have lingered, and risen sometimes unbidden, in his bosom.

Might not Isaac choose to live unwedded, and die, leaving no heir behind? But this expectation, if he ever cherished it, was also to be extinguished; and it was surely no small trial to his fidelity when, commissioned to seek a wife for Isaac, Eliezer had, with his own hand, to quench his last hope of rising in the world—of exchanging poverty for affluence, and a state of servitude for freedom. In such circumstances most people would have entrusted the office to another agent. Committing it into the hands of one who had strong temptations to play his master false, Abraham, more than by any language, expressed his confidence in the fidelity of his servant, and that he believed this Eliezer of Damascus to be true as its famous steel. What a pattern of faithfulness the servant in whom his master could repose such faith! He was an honor to his class, and not to his class only, but to our common nature. The case recalls a circumstance that happened in our own country, and deserved the admiration with which I read it. A lawsuit, breeding its usual passions, had sprung up between two neighbors. When the time approached for its being heard in court, one of the parties called on the other to say that he did not think it necessary both should lose their time going each to state his case before the judge. "Such faith," he said, "have I in your integrity, and that you will do as much justice to my claims as to your own, that I will commit my cause into your hands, leaving you, after having stated the arguments on your side, to state them on mine." What rare and great faith to put in any man! Yet the event justified it, he in whose integrity the other reposed such confidence stating the case so fairly that he lost his own cause and won his opponent's.

Still more trying were the circumstances in which Eliezer justified Abraham's confidence—nobly justified it. Left to manage the affair as he deemed best, he selected for presents some costly and splendid ornaments; and attended by a retinue that indicated both the rank of his master and the importance of his mission, this faithful servant, bidding a long farewell to all his own hopes

of greatness, set out for Mesopotamia. Brown with the dust and scorched with the heat and worn out with the toils of a long journey, he at length arrives within sight of Haran, and descends to water his camels at a well outside the city. It was about the evening hour—the time when the sun in these hot countries, shining with tempered rays or kindling the west with his dying glories, invites people to walk abroad, and the world, like a candle which blazes up before it expires, for a brief period resumes its activity ere it sinks into the repose of night. At this hour the women of the city were wont to go forth to draw water, even those of rank in these simple and early days preferring work to *ennui* or idleness, deeming it no more dishonor to bake bread than to eat it, to make a dress than to wear it, to draw water than to drink it—in short, thinking it no shame to engage in what we call, and many despise as, menial occupations. Knowing this, and that she whom God intends for Isaac's wife may be among the women who shall soon come trooping to the well, Eliezer, like a faithful servant who thinks more of his master's business than of his own ease, immediately seeks direction from God. He casts himself on Providence, saying, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shown kindness unto my master." What an unselfish, noble regard to his master breathes out in this prayer, and what wisdom also in seeking one for Isaac who, by her bearing to himself, should prove herself not high-minded, but humble; not idle, but industrious; not rude, but courteous; not cold, but kind!

The Book of Daniel relates a remarkable instance of immediate answer to prayer. "While I was speaking," says the prophet,

"and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me . . . and said, O Daniel, at the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved." "Greatly beloved" I can believe Eliezer also to have been, for God has no respect of persons, honoring men, whether they be servants or sovereigns, as the spectators do actors on the stage, not for the part they play, but for the way they play it. His prayer was also promptly answered. "Before he had done speaking," as the Bible says—ere the prayer he offered, with his eyes on the city gates, had left his lips—a woman comes out, and with form graceful and erect, elastic step and a water-pitcher poised on her shoulder, makes straight for the well. Her attire is such as virgins wore, and her countenance, which beams with the graces that nor time nor wrinkles nor disease can efface, is exceeding beautiful—a woman this to grace Isaac's house, and tenderly recall to his father's memory the charms that lay mouldering in Machpelah's cave. Can this lovely vision be God's answer to his prayer? He will try—put it to the test he has arranged. Accosting the maiden as she leaves the well, he said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water." Her gracious reply shows that his arrow has hit the mark. It is she, Nahor's daughter. Nor does He who here, as often, proves himself forward to answer prayer, however backward we may be to make it, fail still further to give Eliezer "good speed." Isaac's proxy, he woos and wins the maid, left, as all women should be in a matter of such unspeakable importance, to her own free choice. Giving her heart with her hand, her ready answer to Laban's question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" is, "I will go." Eliezer has executed his commission. And when, in the form of a bride who drops her veil to conceal

her blushes, he presents Isaac with one of the fairest flowers of the East, and not needing marriage revels to drown the recollection of his own disappointment, forgets it in the happiness of his master, how does he justify the confidence of Abraham, and prove himself worthy, in a subordinate sense, of the eulogium that shall crown the labors of every Christian's life, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Eliezer's *diligence* as a servant is almost as conspicuous as his fidelity in that beautiful history which, opening up to us many interesting glimpses of Eastern and ancient manners, relates how Isaac got his wife. There are servants who are honest enough, but lazy. They frequently postpone, as, alas! too many do in the important affairs of salvation, present duties to what they call a more convenient season. "Slothful in business," they go about their work without pith or energy. But Eliezer went to his with a will, as they say; nor, to use a common proverb, did *he let the grass grow at his heels.* On entering Laban's house he finds a grateful change from the toil and hardships of his journey. Servants, summoned to the rites of hospitality, hasten to undo his sandals and wash his feet; luxurious couches invite him to repose; weary and worn, gladly would he rest; and poorly sustained on the pulse and dried fruits that formed the fare of the long journey, nature turns with keen appetite to the smoking board that invites him to sit down and eat. But, pattern to all of us in the highest matters, and to servants in their daily and ordinary avocations, he sets the claims of duty before all things else. What his hand finds to do this man will do now, and do with all his might. He could have found a hundred excuses for delay, but listens to none. He rushes on business. As if every hour and moment were too precious to be lost, he proceeds at once to the matter in hand, and says, waving away the feast, "I will not eat till I have told mine errand." It was his meat and drink to do his master's will. Let it be ours, as it was Christ's, our great Exemplar, to do the will of our Father in heaven.

In coasting along the newly-discovered shores of New Zealand, Captain Cook, with that sagacity which, in the case of John Knox and others, was mistaken for prophetic power, remarked that the time might come when these islands would form productive and valuable colonies—gems in the crown of Britain. Struck with the richness of the foliage and gigantic size of the forest trees, he inferred that that must be a deep rich soil which bore such magnificent timber. Reasoning after this fashion, we might fairly have concluded that the extraordinary virtues of Eliezer must have had their root in a devout and pious heart. Nay, we might have drawn a conclusion favorable to his piety from the very character of his master. Abraham was not less likely than David, and than every good man should be, to regulate his household on these holy principles. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me: he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." But Eliezer's *piety* is, no more than his fidelity and diligence, matter of conjecture. In this story he appears pre-eminent as a man of prayer. He displays an extraordinary confidence in the providence and faithfulness of God. He casts himself on Him whom he loves to call his master's God with almost as much faith as his master himself could have done. With the first dawn of success he bows his head and worships the Lord. "Blessed," he cries, "be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth." Not in our judgment only, but his own, it is not his own skill, but the Lord who leads him; it is not good fortune, but the Lord who speeds him; and indeed it were difficult to say whether the sentiments he breathes are most fragrant with piety toward God or with affection to his master. The saying, *Like master, like man,* had never a happier or more beautiful illustration than in the venerable patriarch and his pious steward.

Were there more masters like Abraham there would certainly

be more servants like Eliezer—more who would in their honesty, fidelity and piety show the results of a master's or mistress's holy example—the benefits, by some servants too lightly esteemed, which may be expected from dwelling with a religious family, in a house where the Sabbath is carefully observed and God is daily worshiped. I have heard servants loudly complained of, and unfavorable contrasts drawn between those of our own and of older times. I would not conceal their faults, though with a kind hand I would rather lay them bare, that they might be amended. Yet when I have heard some complaining, for example, of the ingratitude of servants, I have been tempted to ask what many of them have to be grateful for. They have feelings to be hurt as well as others, and how have I seen them lacerated and rudely torn! Removed from home and friends, they are peculiarly sensitive to kindness, but its words in many instances never fall on their ear. Affections that, like tendrils torn from their support, would attach themselves, in lack of father or mother, to master or mistress, are left to lie bleeding on the ground, and in many instances are trodden under foot. Far from parental care, no kind eye watches over them, nor kind voice warns them of the snares that beset their feet. Many show no more interest in their servants' souls than if they had no souls to be saved, and less care is taken to preserve their virtue from seducers than the family-plate from thieves. They may well ask, in such cases, "What have we to be grateful for?" I do not defend their faults; but so far as my knowledge and experience go, it is but justice to them to say that, were more regard paid to the feelings of servants, more forbearance shown with their failings, more pains taken to make them happy, to keep them from the paths of vice, to cultivate their virtues and bless their souls, there would be less occasion to complain of their depravity and of the degeneracy of the times. With more holy we should have many more happy households, presenting, as in Abraham's, the beautiful sight of pious servants and pious masters growing gray together.

Let me frankly tell servants, on the other hand, that they often have themselves to blame. They forfeit respect by a miserable aping of the manners of their superiors. They waste on their indulgences or on vain and showy attire the means which would save a parent from the degradation of public charity and provide for the wants of their own old age. Yielding to the temptation of higher wages, they will leave a Christian house for one where they will see no good, but much bad, example, imperiling their precious souls, like Lot, when, less repelled by its sins than allured by its green and well-watered pastures, he "pitched his tent toward Sodom." If crimes are committed against servants, they are also committed by them. Falsehood and dishonesty are not the worst they may commit; and the guilt of receiving some simple and unsuspicious one into a house to accomplish her ruin is only equaled by that of the servant who carries vice into a virtuous family, and more wickedly betrays her trust than it were to steal down at midnight with muffled foot and open the door to thieves.

There are many good servants in the world. Who would be so, let them take for their directory and motives these words of St. Paul: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men: knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve Christ." Such God will reward, though they should meet here only cold neglect. But since good servants are as valuable to a good master as he can be to them, they may rest assured that, with the exceptional cases, their virtues will not go unrewarded even of men. With all its faults, there has been no age of the world in which diligence and fidelity, to say nothing of piety, have not been held in high esteem. Not the least interesting of the monuments I saw amid the venerable ruins of Rome was one which held within its broken urn some half-burned bones. They were

the ashes of one who, as appeared from the inscription on the tablet, had belonged to Cæsar's household, and to the memory of whose virtues as a faithful, honest and devoted servant, the emperor himself had ordered that marble to be raised. When wandering among the tombstones of a quiet churchyard, nothing has pleased me more than to light on one raised by a family over the grave of some old faithful nurse or aged retainer of their house; and near by this "gray metropolis of the North" there lies a cemetery where the traveler who goes to meditate among the tombs will find a monumental stone erected by our own gracious sovereign to the memory of a faithful servant. Such honors are rare—too rare, too seldom bestowed. Let servants see to it that they are not too seldom deserved, and that, "doing all as to the Lord and not to men," they earn, besides their wages, such a character as his master might have engraven on Eliezer's tombstone—"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS, FERVENT IN SPIRIT, SERVING THE LORD."

# V.

## ISAAC.

ABRAHAM and Sarah were for many years childless, and long did they have to wait for the son whom God had so repeatedly promised to give them. But at length their faith was rewarded, and Isaac was born to them in their old age.

Of Isaac's childhood we know scarcely anything. When eight days old, he was circumcised, and thus was made a member of the Jewish Church, and no doubt he was brought up as a servant of God from his very infancy. His pious parents watched over him with no common care, and taught him early to walk in the paths of holiness.

Scripture tells us that when a boy he suffered greatly from the contempt of his half-brother Ishmael—so much so that Abraham was forced to drive out Ishmael and expel him from his home.

And now picture to yourself Isaac grown up to manhood. Abraham was at this time considerably more than a hundred years old, and Sarah was not much less. Not only did they look on their son as the joy and support of their declining years, but they regarded him as a precious gift from the Lord, for which they never ceased to be thankful. They were constantly reminded, too, that through *this very son* God was going to bestow the most glorious blessings on the world.

Oh, what a damper, then, to their hopes and expectations must it have been when God commanded that this Isaac—this child



Meeting of Isaac and Rebecca

of promise—should be put to death, and that too by Abraham's own hand! And when father and son were journeying together to the spot where this extraordinary sacrifice was to be made, how touching must that inquiry have been which broke forth from Isaac, "My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

Now, mark the quiet, patient, cheerful submission of Isaac. There was no struggle to escape from death, no upbraiding words addressed to his parent. He was now thirty years old, and might therefore have offered resistance. But there he lies like a lamb ready for the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers. It is enough for him to know that such was God's command, and he was therefore willing to lay down his life.

I need not remind you how God in his mercy interfered and spared Isaac, and how Abraham and his son returned from Mount Moriah with hearts full of thankfulness and joy. Their faith had been put to the severest trial that we can possibly imagine, and it proved to be like silver "purified seven times in the fire."

Oh that we may be as willing as Isaac was to suffer at God's bidding! Oh that, like Paul, we may be ready "not to be bound only, but also to die"! It is not likely that we shall be tried as these servants of God were, but we should desire to have the same holy steadfastness and the same lively faith that they had, desiring only "that Christ may be magnified in our bodies, whether it be by life or by death."

We now come to an event of much importance to Isaac—his marriage. His father had taken the greatest care to provide for him such a wife as God would approve. He had sent on this errand a trusty servant on whom he could depend, and he had sought anxiously the guiding hand of God. Many a long mile did his servant travel, and at length he found Rebekah, the very person whom God himself had chosen.

When the news reached Isaac, he must have felt very happy

in the assurance that this matter was from the Lord, and that in taking Rebekah for his wife he would be acting according to his will. As the damsel draws near her future home, Isaac goes forth to meet her. It was eventide, and he had been spending some time in secret meditation. No doubt this was his daily custom, and I dare say he found no little comfort and refreshment in thus holding communion with God.

Dear reader, do you know anything of this holy meditation? Do you love to be alone with your heavenly Father? David recommends this exercise in the Book of Psalms. He says, "Commune with thine own heart." And he himself found the blessedness of it: it warmed his heart and made it glow within him. "While I was thus musing," he says, "the fire burned."

It is very good for us sometimes to get alone and think over God's past dealings with us, his mercies and our shortcomings. It is good to think of the Saviour and his amazing love to us, and of that home which he has prepared for those who serve him here.

Isaac's married life was a very happy one. I do not say that it was *all* happiness; he had his ups and downs as well as ourselves. It was not all brightness; he had his dark days, as most of us have. His path was not always strewed with flowers; sometimes it was rough and thorny.

His parents were taken from him in a good old age, but he mourned over them not as one without hope, for he felt that they were blessed, dying in the Lord.

At their father's grave the two brothers, who had probably been separated for years, met once more. Such solemn seasons have often proved a time of blessing, and hearts which have long been torn asunder have thus been drawn together. Such was the happy effect of Abraham's death on Isaac and Ishmael.

Shortly after the loss of his father, two children were born unto Isaac and Rebekah. But Satan soon spoiled their joy, for he tempted them to make favorites of their children. Isaac had

a preference for the eldest son Esau, and Rebekah for Jacob. This favoritism brought great trouble into the little household, and was the cause of much future strife between the twin-brothers.

How careful should parents be to avoid all partiality as regards their children! Their affection should be divided as equally as possible; and if unhappily a preference is felt, they should watch against it, and carefully avoid any outward marks of it.

Yes, Isaac's portion was one of trouble as well as joy. At one time, in order to preserve life, he was forced to leave his own native land, where a famine had broken out, and to live for a time among the Philistines. It was a heavy trial to him to sojourn among a strange people, and a people, too, who knew nothing of the only true God; but it was a matter of necessity and not of choice.

We see, however, in this how God watched over his chosen servant. Not only did he protect him from harm, but he greatly blessed him during his sojourn among these strangers. We read that Isaac "sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold, and the Lord blessed him; and the man waxed great"—so much so that the Philistines looked upon him with an envious eye. But the Lord again and again assured him that all would be well, and that he was under his special care.

Happy those who have committed their cause to God! They may meet with trials in the world; the scoffs and jeers of ungodly men may fall like hail around them; but in his hands they are safe, and he will make all things work together for their good.

But Isaac had other troubles toward the close of his life. For many years he was afflicted with blindness, and during this time his declining days were saddened by the deceit of one of his sons and the ungodliness of the other.

Thus was Isaac punished for his weakness in preferring one of

his children to the other. And thus we see how, even in the case of God's servants, he chastens them for any departure from the right way.

But the Lord loved Isaac, and afflicted him for his good. The scourge that smote him was from a Father's hand; the cup that he was called to drink was mixed by a Father's love. And now Isaac is far out of the reach of trials; he is a dweller in that happy land where tears are never shed, because sorrow is unknown.

Blessed Lord, send us trials if we need them; chasten us if thou wilt; but leave us not to ourselves. Above all, "cast us not off in the time of old age; forsake us not when our strength faileth."

# VI.

## JACOB.

ABRAHAM was a hero, Jacob was 'a plain man, dwelling in tents.' Abraham we feel to be above ourselves, Jacob to be like ourselves." So the distinction between the two great patriarchs has been drawn out by a celebrated theologian.[1] "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." So the experience of Israel himself is summed up in the close of his life. Human cares, jealousies, sorrows, cast their shade over the scene —the golden dawn of the patriarchal age is overcast; there is no longer the same unwavering faith; we are no longer in communion with the "High Father," the "Friend of God;" we at times almost doubt whether we are not with his enemy. But for this very reason the interest attaching to Jacob, though of a less lofty and universal kind, is more touching, more penetrating, more attractive. Nothing but the perverse attempt to demand perfection of what is held before us as imperfect could blind us to the exquisite truthfulness which marks the delineation of the patriarch's character.

Look at him as his course is unrolled through the long vicissitudes which make his life a faithful mirror of human existence in its many aspects. Look at him as compared with his brother Esau. Unlike the sharp contrast of the earlier brothers of sacred

[1] Newman's Sermons.

history, in these two the good and evil are so mingled that at first we might be at a loss which to follow, which to condemn. The distinctness with which they seem to stand and move before us against the clear distance is a new phase in the history. Esau, the shaggy, red-haired huntsman, the man of the field, with his arrows, his quiver and his bow, coming in weary from the chase, caught as with the levity and eagerness of a child by the sight of the lentile soup—"Feed me, I pray thee, with the red, red pottage"—yet so full of generous impulse, so affectionate toward his aged father, so forgiving toward his brother, so open-hearted, so chivalrous,—who has not at times felt his heart warm toward the poor rejected Esau, and been tempted to join with him as he cries with "a great and exceeding bitter cry," "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father!" And who does not in like manner feel at times his indignation swell against the younger brother? "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he hath supplanted me these two times?" He entraps his brother, he deceives his father, he makes a bargain even in his prayer; in his dealings with Laban, in his meeting with Esau, he still calculates and contrives; he distrusts his neighbors; he treats with prudential caution the insult to his daughter and the cruelty of his sons; he hesitates to receive the assurance of Joseph's good will; he repels, even in his lesser traits, the free confidence that we cannot withhold from the patriarchs of the elder generation.

But yet, taking the two from first to last, how entirely is the judgment of Scripture and the judgment of posterity confirmed by the result of the whole! The mere impulsive hunter vanishes away, light as air: "He did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." The substance, the strength of the chosen family, the true inheritance of the promise of Abraham, was interwoven with the very essence of the character of the "plain man dwelling in tents"—steady, persevering, moving on with deliberate settled purpose, through

years of suffering and prosperity, of exile and return, of bereavement and recovery. The birthright is always before him. Rachel is won from Laban by hard service, "and the seven years seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her." Isaac and Rebekah and Rebekah's nurse are remembered with a faithful, filial remembrance; Joseph and Benjamin are long and passionately loved with a more than parental affection, bringing down his gray hairs, for their sakes, "in sorrow to the grave." This is no character to be contemned or scoffed at; if it was encompassed with much infirmity, yet its very complexity demands our reverent attention; in it are bound up, as his double name expresses, not one man, but two; by toil and struggle, Jacob, the supplanter, is gradually transformed into Israel, the prince of God; the harsher and baser features are softened and purified away; he looks back over his long career with the fullness of experience and humility: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." Alone of the patriarchal family his end is recorded as invested with the solemnity of warning and of prophetic song: "Gather yourselves together, ye sons of Jacob, and hearken unto Israel your father." We need not fear to acknowledge that the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac was also the God of Jacob.

Most unworthy indeed should we be of the gift of the sacred narrative if we failed to appreciate it in this its full, its many-sided aspect. Even in the course of the Jewish history, what a foreshadowing of the future! We may venture to trace in the wayward chieftain of Edom the likeness of the fickle, uncertain Edomite, now allied, now hostile, to the seed of promise; the wavering, unstable dynasty which came forth from Idumæa; Herod the magnificent and the cruel; Herod Antipas, who "heard John gladly" and slew him; Herod Agrippa, "almost a Christian"—half Jew and half heathen. "A turbulent and unruly race"—so Josephus describes the Idumæans of his day—

"always hovering on the verge of revolution, always rejoicing in changes, roused to arms by the slightest motion of flattery, rushing to battle as if they were going to a feast." But we cannot mistake the type of the Israelites in him whom, beyond even Abraham and Isaac, they recognized as their father Israel. His doubtful qualities exactly recall to us the form of character which, even to a proverb, we call in scorn, "Jewish." By his peculiar discipline of exile and suffering, a true counterpart is produced of the special faults and special gifts known to us chiefly through his persecuted descendants in the Middle Ages. In Jacob we see the same timid, cautious watchfulness that we know so well, though under darker colors, through our great masters of fiction, in Shylock of Venice and Isaac of York. But no less, in the nobler side of his career, do we trace the germs of the unbroken endurance, the undying resolution, which keeps the nation alive still even in its present outcast condition, and which was the basis, in its brightest days, of the heroic zeal, long-suffering and hope of Moses, of David, of Jeremiah, of the Maccabees, of the twelve Jewish apostles and the first martyr Stephen.

We cannot, however, narrow the lessons of Jacob's history to the limits of the Israelite Church. All ecclesiastical history is the gainer by the sight of such a character so delineated. It is a character not all black nor all white, but checkered with the mixed colors which make up so vast a proportion of the double phases of the leaders of the Church and the world in every age. The neutrality (so to speak) of the Scripture narrative may be seen by its contrast with the dark hues in which Esau is painted by the Rabbinical authors. He is hindered in his chase by Satan; hell opens as he goes in to his father; he gives his father dogs' flesh instead of venison; he tries to bite Jacob on his return; he commits five sins in one day. This is the difference between mere national animosity and the high impartial judgment of the sacred story, evenly balanced and steadily held, yet not regard-

less of the complicated and necessary variations of human thought and action. For students of theology, for future pastors, for young men in the opening of life, what a series of lessons is opened in the history of these two youths, issuing from their father's tent in Beersheba! The free, easy, frank good nature of the profane Esau is not overlooked; the craft, duplicity, timidity, of the religious Jacob is duly recorded. Yet, on the one hand, fickleness, unsteadiness, weakness, want of faith and want of principle, ruin and render useless the noble qualities of the first; and on the other hand, steadfast purpose, resolute sacrifice of present to future, and fixed principle, purify, elevate, turn to lasting good even the baser qualities of the second. And yet again, whether in the two brothers or their descendants, we see how in each the good and evil strove together and worked their results almost to the end. Esau and his race cling still to the outskirts of the chosen people. "Meddle not," it was said in after times, "with your brethren the children of Esau, for I will not give you of their land, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau for a possession." Israel, on the other hand, is outcast, thwarted, deceived, disappointed, bereaved—"all these things are against me;" in him, and in his progeny also, the curse of Ebal is always blended with the blessings of Gerizim. How hardly Esau was condemned! how hardly Jacob was saved! We are kept in long and just suspense; the prodigal may, as far as human eye can see, be on his way home; the blameless son, who "has been in his father's house always," may be shutting himself out. Yet the final issue to which, on the whole, this primitive history calls our attention, is the same which is borne out by the history of the Church even in these latter days of complex civilization. There is, after all, a weakness in selfish worldliness for which no occasional impulse can furnish any adequate compensation, even though it be the generosity of an Arabian chief or the inimitable good nature of an English king. There is a nobleness in principle and faith which cannot be wholly destroyed, even though it

be marred by the hardness or the duplicity of the Jew or the Jesuit, or any other deceitful race.

Jacob's going out from Beersheba toward Haran is, if one may so say, the first retrograde movement in the history of the Church. Was the migration of Abraham to be reversed? Was the westward tide of events to roll back upon itself? Was the chosen race to sink back into the life of Mesopotamian deserts? But the first halt of the wanderer revealed his future destinies. "The sun went down;" the night gathered round; he was on the central thoroughfare, on the hard back-bone of the mountains of Palestine; the ground was strewn with wide sheets of bare rock; here and there stood up isolated fragments like ancient Druidical monuments. On the hard ground he lay down for rest, and in the visions of the night the rough stones formed themselves into a vast staircase reaching into the depth of the wide and open sky, which, without any interruption of tent or tree, was stretched over the sleeper's head. On that staircase were ascending and descending the messengers of God, and from above there came the divine voice which told the houseless wanderer that, little as he thought it, he had a protector there and everywhere; that even in this bare and open thoroughfare, in no consecrated grove or cave, "the Lord was in this place, though he knew it not." "This was Bethel, the house of God, and this was the gate of heaven."

The monument, whatever it was, that was still in after ages ascribed to the erection of Jacob, must have been, like so many described or seen in other times and countries, a rude copy of the natural features of the place, as at Carmac in Brittany, the cromlechs of Wales or Cornwall, or the walls of Tiryus, where the play of nature and the simplicity of art are almost undistinguishable. In all ages of primitive history, such monuments are, if we may so call them, the earliest ecclesiastical edifices. In Greece there were rude stones at Delphi still visible in the second century, anterior to any temple, and, like the rock of Bethel, anointed with oil by the pilgrims who came thither. In

Northern Africa, Arnobius, after his conversion, describes the kind of fascination which had drawn him toward one of these aged stones, streaming and shining with the sacred oil which had been poured upon it. The black stone of the Arabian Caaba reaches back to the remotest antiquity of which history or tradition can speak.

In all these rough anticipations of a fixed structure or building, we trace the beginnings of what in the case of Jacob is first distinctly called "Bethel," the *house* of God, "the *place* of worship"—the "Beit-allah" of Mecca, the "Bætulia" of the early Phœnician worship. When we see the rude remains of Abury in England, there is a strange interest in the thought that they are the first architectural witness of English religion. Even so the pillar or cairn or cromlech of Bethel must have been looked upon by the Israelites, and may still be looked upon in thought by us, as the precursor of every "house of God" that has since arisen in the Jewish or Christian world—the temple, the cathedral, the church, the chapel—nay, more, of those secret places of worship that are marked by no natural beauty and seen by no human eye—the closet, the catacomb, the thoroughfare, of the true worshiper. There was neither in the aspect nor in the ground of Bethel any *religio loci*, but the place was no less "dreadful"—full of awe. The stone of Bethel remained as the memorial that an all-encompassing Providence watches over its chosen instruments, however unconscious at the time of what and where they are. "The Shepherd, the *Stone* of Israel," was one of the earliest names by which the God of Jacob was known. The vision of the way reaching from heaven to earth received its highest application in a divine manifestation yet more universal and unexpected. Not in the temple or on the high priest, but on the despised Nazarene, the Son of man, was Nathanael to see the fulfillment of Jacob's vision—"the angels of God ascending" into the open heaven, and "descending" on the common earth.

The chief interest of the story of Jacob's twenty years' service with Laban lies in its reopening of the relations between the settlers in Palestine and the original tribe of Mesopotamia, which appeared on Abraham's migration to have been closed. "Then Jacob 'lifted up his feet' and came into the land of the 'children' of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field; and lo! three flocks of sheep lying by it, and a great stone was on the well's mouth." The shepherds were there; they had advanced far away from "the city of Nahor." It was not the well outside the walls, with the hewn staircase, down which Rebekah descended with the pitcher on her head. Rachel comes, guiding her father's flocks, like the daughter of the Bedouin chiefs at the present day, and Jacob claims the Bedouin right of cousinship: "And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the *sheep* of Laban his mother's brother"—observe the simplicity of the juxtaposition—"that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother; and Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept." Then begins the long contest of cunning and perseverance, in which true love wins the game at last against selfish gains. Seven years, the service of a slave, thrice over, did Jacob pay. He is the faithful Eastern "good shepherd;" that which was torn of beasts he brought not unto his master; he bare the loss of it; of his hand "did his hard taskmaster" require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night; in the day the drought "of the desert" consumed him, and the frost in the cold Eastern nights, "and his sleep departed from him." In Edessa was laid up for many centuries what professed to be the tent in which he had guarded his master's flocks. And at last his fortunes were built up; the slave became a prince, and the second migration took place from Mesopotamia into Palestine, "with much cattle, 'with male and female slaves,' with camels and with asses."

It was the termination of the dark and uncertain prelude of

Jacob's life. He is now the exile returning home after years of wandering. He is the chief, raised by his own efforts and God's providence to a high place amongst the tribes of the earth. He stands like Abraham on the heights of Bethel, like Moses on the heights of Pisgah, overlooking from the watch-tower, "the Mizpeh" of Gilead, the whole extent of the land which is to be called after his name. The deep valley of the Jordan, stretched below, recalls the mighty change of fortune: "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." The wide descent of the valley southward toward the distant mountains of Seir reminds him of the contest which may be in store for him from the advancing tribe of his brother of Edom. But the story sets before us a deeper than any mere external change or struggle. It is as though the twenty years of exile and servitude had wrought their work. Every incident and word is fraught with a double meaning; in every instance earthly and spiritual images are put one over against the other, hardly to be seen in our English version, but in the original clearly intended. Other forms than his own company are surrounding him; another face than that of his brother Esau is to welcome his return to the land of his birth and kindred. He was become two "bands" or "hosts;" he had divided his people, his flocks and herds and camels, into two "hosts;" he had sent "messengers" before to announce his approach. But as Jacob went on his way, the "messengers" of God met him, as when he had seen them ascending and descending the stair of heaven at Bethel; and "when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim"—that is, "The two hosts." The name was handed on to after ages, and the place became the sanctuary of the Transjordanic tribes. He was still on the heights of the Transjordanic hills beyond the deep defile where the Jabbok—as its name implies—"wrestles" with the mountains through which it descends to the Jordan. In the dead of night he sent his wives and his sons and all that he had across

the defile, and he was left alone; and in the darkness and stillness, in the crisis of his life, in the agony of his fear for the issue of the morrow, there "wrestled" with him one whose name he knew not until the dawn rose over the hills of Gilead. They "wrestled," and he prevailed, yet not without bearing away marks of the conflict. He is saved, as elsewhere in his whole career, so here—"saved, yet so as by fire." In that struggle, in that seal and crown of his life, he wins his new name: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, 'the supplanter,' but Israel, 'the prince of God,' for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." The dark, crafty character of the youth, though never wholly lost—for "Jacob" he still was called to the end of his days—has been by trial and affliction changed into the princelike, godlike character of his manhood. And what was he with whom he had wrestled in the visions of the night, and who had vanished from his grasp as the day was breaking? "Tell me, I pray thee, *thy* name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there, and Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (that is, 'the face of God'), for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." And as he passed over Penuel, the sun, of which the dawn had been already breaking, "burst" upon him, and he "halted upon his thigh."

The dreaded meeting with Esau has passed; the two brothers retain their characters throughout the interview—the generosity of the one and the caution of the other. And for the last time Esau retires to make room for Jacob; he leaves to him the land of his inheritance, and disappears on his way to the wild mountains of Seir. In those wild mountains, in the red hills of Edom, in the caves and excavations to which the soft sandstone rocks so readily lend themselves, in the cliffs which afterward gave to the settlement the name of "Sela" or "Petra," lingered the ancient aboriginal tribe of the Horites or dwellers in the holes of the rock. These "the children of Esau succeeded, and destroyed

from before them, and dwelt in their stead." It was the rough rocky country described in their father's blessing: "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven;" by the sword they were to live; a race of hunters among the mountains; their nearest allies, the Arabian tribe Nebaioth. Petra, the mysterious secluded city, with its thousand caves, is the lasting monument of their local habitation.

So we part from the house of Esau and return to the latter days of Jacob. He, too, moves onward. From the summit of Mount Gerizim the eye rests on the wide opening in the eastern hills beyond the Jordan which marks the issue of the Jabbok into the Jordan valley. Through that opening, straight toward Gerizim and Shechem, Jacob descends "in peace and triumph."

At every stage of his progress henceforward we are reminded that it is the second and not the first settlement of Palestine that is now unfolding itself. It is no longer, as in the case of Abraham, the purely pastoral life; it is the gradual transition from the pastoral to the agricultural. Jacob, on his first descent from the downs of Gilead, is no longer a mere dweller in tents; he "builds him an *house;*" he makes "*booths*" or "*huts*" for his cattle, and therefore the name of the place is called "Succoth." He advances across the Jordan; he comes to Shechem in the heart of Palestine, whither Abraham had come before him. But it is no longer the uninhabited "place" and grove; it is "the city" of Shechem, and "before the city" his tent is pitched. And he comes not merely as an Arabian wanderer, but as with fixed aim and fixed habitation in view. He sets his eye on the rich plain which stretches eastward of the city, now, as eighteen hundred years ago, and then, as twenty centuries before, "white already to the harvest" with its waving cornfields. This, and not a mere sepulchre like the cave of Machpelah, is the possession which he purchases from the inhabitants of the land. The very pieces of money with which he buys the land are not merely weighed, as in the bargain with Ephron; they are stamped with

the earliest mark of coinage—the figure of the lambs of the flocks. In this vale of Shechem the patriarch rests, as in a permanent home. Beersheba, Hebron, even Bethel, are nothing to him in comparison with this one chosen portion which is to descend to his favorite son.

It is with the latest portion of Jacob's life that are most clearly interwoven those cords of natural and domestic affection which so bind his name round our hearts. He revisits then his old haunts at Bethel and Beersheba. The ancient servant of his house, Deborah, his mother's nurse, the only link which survived between him and the face which he should see no more, dies, and is not forgotten, but is buried beneath the hill of Bethel, under the oak well known to the many who passed that way in later times as Allonbachuth ("the oak of tears"). They draw near to a place then known only by its ancient Canaanite name, and now for the first time mentioned in history—"Ephratah, which is Bethlehem." The village appears spread along its narrow ridge, but they are not to reach it. "There was but a little way to come to Ephrath, and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing—for she died—that she called the name of the child Ben-oni (that is, 'the son of sorrow'); but his father called him Ben-jamin (that is, 'the son of my right hand'). And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath. And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." The pillar has long disappeared, but her memory long remained. She still lived on in Joseph's dreams. Her name still clung to the nuptial benediction of the villagers of Bethlehem. After the allotment of the country to the several tribes, the territory of the Benjamites was extended to a long strip far into the south, to include the sepulchre of their beloved ancestress. When the infants of Bethlehem were slaughtered by Herod, it seemed to the Evangelist as though the voice of Rachel were heard weeping for her children from her neighboring grave.

In the mixture of agricultural and pastoral life which now gathers around him is laid the train of the last and most touching incidents of Jacob's story. It is whilst they are feeding their father's flocks together that the fatal envy arises against the favorite son. It is whilst they are binding the sheaves in the well-known cornfield that Joseph's sheaf stands upright in his dream. On the confines of the same field at Shechem the brothers were feeding their flocks when Joseph was sent from Hebron to "see whether it were well with his brethren and well with the flocks, and to bring his father word again." And from Shechem he followed them to the two wells of Dothan, in the passes of Manasseh, when the caravan of Arabian merchants passed by and he disappeared from his father's eyes. His history belongs henceforth to a wider sphere. The glimpse of Egypt, opened up to us for a moment in the life of Abraham, now spreads into a vast and permanent prospect.

The story of the descent into Egypt, too simple to need any elaborate elucidation, is a fitting close to the life of Jacob. Once more he is to set forth on his pilgrimage. He came to the frontier plain of Beersheba; he received the assurance that beyond that frontier he was to descend yet farther into Egypt. He "went down" from the steppes to Beersheba; he crossed the desert and met his son on the border of the cultivated land; he was brought into the presence of the great Pharaoh; he saw his race established in the land of Egypt. And then the time drew near that Israel must die, and his one thought, oftentimes repeated, was that his bones should not rest in that strange land, not in pyramid or painted chamber, but in the cell that he had "digged for himself" in the primitive sepulchre of his fathers. So his body was embalmed after the manner of the Egyptians, and a vast funeral procession bore it away, the asses and the camels of the pastoral tribe mingling with the chariots and horsemen characteristic of Egypt. They came—so the narrative seems to imply—not by the direct road which the patriarchs had hitherto traversed on

their way to Egypt by El-Arish, but round the long circuit by which Moses afterward led their descendants till they arrived on the banks of the Jordan. Farther than this the Egyptian escort came not. But the valley of the Jordan resounded with loud, shrill lamentations peculiar to their ceremonial of mourning, and with the funeral games with which, then as now, the Arabs encircle the tomb of a departed chief. From this double tradition the spot was known in after times as "the meadow" or "the mourning" of the Egyptians (*Abel-Mizraim*), and as *Beth-hogla* ("the house of the encircling dance"). "And his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah. And Joseph returned into Egypt, he and all his brethren, and all that went up with him, after he had buried his father."

# VII.

## JOSEPH.

WHATEVER way we turn a diamond, it flashes out rays of light of various hues, but all exquisitely beautiful. Such a gem is the story of Joseph. Indeed, it is in many respects unique. A universal favorite, one over which gentle childhood bends with interest and venerable age with tears, it is in some respects as unrivaled in the Bible as the Bible is unrivaled among books.

Regarded only as a literary composition, with what inimitable beauty and pathos is the story told! In Jacob's doting love for the motherless boy, the first-born of his beloved Rachel; in the wildness of that grief the bloody cloak awoke, and sons and daughters rose in vain to comfort; in the rebound of his feelings at the news from Egypt, from the unbelief that heard them as too good to be true, to the vehement emotion that burst out in the cry, "Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die;" in the wakening up of the consciences, the dread and the remorse of the guilty brothers; in the trembling question, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? is he yet alive?" in the tender recollections that woke at the sight of Benjamin, and sent Joseph to another chamber to preserve his disguise and relieve his heart by a flood of tears; in that matchless address of Judah when, making us forget his crimes and mingle our tears with his, he pleaded for the old man's sake, and offered himself a ransom for the trembling boy; and in the events that

immediately followed the disclosure, when, unable any longer to restrain his feelings, Joseph tore off the mask, and crying, "I am Joseph, your brother," broke out into such a burst of passionate emotion that his weeping was heard throughout all the house,—in these there are touches of nature which the greatest uninspired genius never approached—so fine, so true, so tender, that no man of ordinary sensibility could read the story aloud but his tongue would falter and his eyes be dimmed with tears.

Considered simply as a story, what novel paints scenes more interesting or relates events so picturesque and romantic? To apply a common expression to this portion of sacred Scripture, it is "eminently sensational"—that is, abounds in passages which excite interest, deeply stir the emotions, warm and draw out the affections, equally with those highly-seasoned tales which so largely feed the public appetite. Yet how much they differ! *Its* details are true, while theirs are false; and while their tendency is to debase rather than improve the taste or purify the heart, the history of Joseph recommends itself, as I hope to show, by its lofty morality, the spirit of piety which it breathes and the lessons of wisdom which it teaches. Seek stories that rouse and sustain our interest by remarkable vicissitudes of fortune, the play of lights and shadows, sudden alternations of sunshine and of storm, scenes both of the wildest grief and of ecstatic joy, hairbreadth escapes from horrid crimes, from pit and prison and deadly perils, where shall we find one to compare with Joseph's? No man I ever read of had such experience of the vicissitudes of life, passed unscathed through so many strange and fiery trials, met with deliverances so signal, or had more apparent cause to doubt, and in the end more real cause to acknowledge, a presiding providence and the goodness of God.

Passed in quiet studies or domestic duties or the routine of business, and in the common walks of piety, there are many good lives that would make very dull books. Hence, though their works may be published, and are such that the world would not

willingly allow to perish, some great men have found no biographers. Their lives lacked stirring incidents, being marked by none but such as are common to humanity. But while their lives resembled some rich but level country, where cottages stand embowered amid smiling orchards, and village spires and castle towers rise above umbrageous woods, and fields wave with bounteous harvests, and fat herds slake their thirst at streams which flow between sedgy banks quietly to the sea, the life of Joseph is eminently picturesque. It resembles the scenes that lend their charms to the Alps or Apennines, where the thundering cataract and foaming torrent alternate with lakes that lie asleep in the arms of beauty, where frowning crags look down on flowery meadows, and deep dark valleys are parted by mountains whose peaks pierce the azure sky, and glistening with eternal snows, seem to bear up the vault of heaven.

The interest of such scenes and the pleasure they afford are much enhanced if religion lends them her dignity, and their physical is associated with circumstances of moral grandeur. Such is the case, for example, in the grand valleys of Piedmont, the mountain-home of the Waldenses, where their fathers prayed and fought for three long centuries—so persecuted by bloody papists that, as one of their historians says, "every rock became a monument, every meadow saw executions and every village had its roll of martyrs." Even so the interest of Joseph's story deepens when, penetrating beneath the surface, we discover in him a type of Christ, and see how many of the events of his life appear to foreshadow some of the leading incidents in our Saviour's. Many are the points of resemblance in the histories of Joseph and of Jesus. This may be, so to speak, more of accident than intention, yet the analogies between the two are remarkable, and will interest and instruct us, if they do nothing more.

Both were the beloved sons of their fathers. Both were envied and hated of their brethren. Both were the victims of base conspirators. Both had a remarkable garment, and were stripped

of it by cruel hands. Both, though innocent, were accused of the foulest crimes. Both were tempted to great sins, and both alike recoiled from and repelled the tempters—the "Get thee behind me, Satan!" of Jesus recalling Joseph's words when, starting back, horror sitting on his face, he protested, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Both were slain—the one in fact, the other in intention. Both not only forgave, but saved, their murderers. In both cases these "thought evil, but God meant it unto good." Joseph's burial in the pit is a symbol of Christ's in the tomb. He comes from both pit and prison a type of Him whom death could not hold in his grasp, nor the grave in her ancient fetters. And in that young Hebrew whom Pharaoh calls from a prison to the palace that he may invest him with imperial authority and commit into his hands the management of his kingdom—in the words of Scripture, to put his seal on his hand, to array him in vesture of fine linen, to put a gold chain upon his neck, to make him ride in the second chariot which he had, to send heralds before him, crying, "Bow the knee!"—we see Jesus. Here is a type and shadow of our glorified and ascended Lord as he stands at the right hand of God, and at the mandate, "Let all the angels of God worship him," ten times ten thousand fall prostrate at his feet. From Egypt's streets and palace we are carried away to the celestial city—to the scene where the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders, with harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints, fall down before the Lamb, and sing the new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

In leaving such sacred and lofty topics for that feature of Joseph's life which makes him a type of *the successful man*, it may appear that I am making a great descent. Success is not always another term for merit and worth, for excellence of conduct and

nobleness of character. But however some may have climbed up by foul means, marking their path with slime, so did not this child, not of fortune, but of God. While its success is one of the most remarkable features of Joseph's career, it was won, with God's blessing, by those virtues which form the true foundations of a happy, useful and successful life. It may be to our profit and advantage to consider his history in this light. Promising before we part to trace his success to these, and draw from his career some useful lessons, let me now ask my readers to look at him as the very type and model of a successful man.

The heathens had a goddess whom they called Fortune. She is commonly represented standing by a wheel. From this, which she turns round and round, are drawn the blanks and prizes in which she assigns their different destinies to men, without any respect whatever to their merits and demerits. She could not do otherwise, indeed; for while her hand is on the wheel, a bandage is on her eyes. So all things fall out by chance—blind and indiscriminating chance—a man who deserves a prize often receiving a blank, while success falls to the lot of such as, indolent and unworthy, have no claim to reward.

No picture of the world could be more fallacious. Dethroning God, it denies a superintending Providence, and reducing everything to blind fate and chaotic confusion, it makes man the sport of elements over which neither he nor any one else has the least control. In its practical influence this doctrine must be eminently pernicious. It weakens, or rather destroys, all the springs of activity, and furnishes sloth and self-indulgence and vice itself with a too acceptable excuse.

Unchristian as it is, this old heathen notion is still, to some extent, current among us. This may be owing to those occasional cases where we see success attending such as appear to have done nothing to deserve it, and where, on the other hand, we see meritorious men outstripped by inferior rivals. From such cases we, ignorant of all the circumstances, are apt to draw

too hasty conclusions, looking on them with the gloomy eyes of him who complained, "I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to all." Account for it as we may, Fortune, though she has no temple, has still her worshipers. More than would be willing to confess it trust not a little to chance. Reckless or lazy, they hope that something will turn up; and to how great an extent the old heathen notion exists and keeps its hold of men crops out in the terms so frequently applied to one whose career has been signalized by remarkable success. He is called a child of fortune—a favorite of fortune.

The ideas these terms convey are quite illusory, and calculated to have a most prejudicial effect on the minds especially of the young—of those who have the work and battle of life before them. Not more impious and less pernicious was the idea expressed in the speech of a Norseman—one of that brave, indomitable, self-reliant, battle-fighting, sea-subduing, adventurous race, to whose blood flowing in their veins Britons owe their enterprise, the energy which has won brilliant victories in fight and planted prosperous colonies in all quarters of the globe. Bringing to the work of life an indomitable energy, compelling the winds that blew around and the waves that thundered on his stormy shores to waft him on to fortune, the old pagan—a skillful seaman, a dauntless soldier, one who had cultivated with equal success the arts of peace and war—is reported to have said, "I believe neither in idols nor in demons: I put all my trust in my strength of body and of soul." What a contrast to his bold atheism, and also to their confidence who trust in the blind throws of fortune, the language of the pious Psalmist!—"God is my strength and power, and he maketh my way perfect. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation, and thy

gentleness hath made me great. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation." Equally enlightened and devout were the sentiments of Joseph. A divine Providence is gratefully acknowledged in the very names of his children. He calls his first-born Manasseh, saying, "For God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house;" and enshrining the same acknowledgment in the name of his second, he calls him Ephraim, "for God," he said, hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

These cases—that of David and this of Joseph—present, it may be admitted, such remarkable changes of fortune as to constrain the dullest to acknowledge Him who setteth up one and putteth down another. But on the other hand such cases are, it may be said, so rare that they can furnish no proper stimulus to exertion. By no means. It is not uncommon for men to rise from obscurity to fame and fortune if, denying themselves and exerting their energies to the utmost, they seize the opportunities Providence presents and our great English dramatist describes, saying,

> "There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

For example, what circumstances apparently more desperate, some twenty years ago, than his who now rules France and holds the destinies of Europe in his hands?[1] Then an exile, a homeless wanderer, he was indulging in visions of conquest which excited only the pity of women and the scorn of sensible men. Yet improbable as once it seemed, his dream has come to pass—come true as his who, in brethren on their knees at his feet, saw the sheaves of a boyish dream bending to his. History proves what men, for their encouragement, would do well to remember—that there is no trade nor position, however humble, from which, God favoring them, some have not climbed the ladder at the heels, though not perhaps to the height, of Joseph.

For example, John Bunyan was originally a tinker; Faraday,

[1] Written before the fall of Napoleon III.

the celebrated chemist, a bookbinder; the inventor of the steam-engine, a blacksmith; John Foster, whose writings will live with our tongue, a weaver; Cook, the distinguished navigator, a day-laborer; Carey, the first of missionaries, a cobbler; Hugh Miller, a mason; while Jeremy Taylor, Arkwright, the founder of our cotton manufactures, and Tenterden, the great lord chief-justice of England, issued from barbers' shops. And in less famous spheres our merchants and men of commerce present equally remarkable examples of the success that rewards industry and exertion. How many of them have entered the towns where they laid the foundation and built up the fabric of gigantic fortunes as poor as the lonely wanderer who crossed the fords of Jordan with only a staff in his hand!

The foundations of Joseph's fortune, the steps by which he rose from slavery, the pit and the prison, to be the second man in Egypt, were not essentially different from that wisdom and self-denial and self-control and energy of character by which, with sound principles and God's blessing, many have commanded, and others may still command, a brilliant success. This I will show. I would meanwhile remark that the world has seldom seen such a rapid and great change of fortune. Not incredible, the story is yet so improbable that we might have scrupled to receive it on any but divine authority. He would be a bold novelist who would venture to weave some of its incidents into the pages of a romance.

In his early loss of a tender mother; in the malignant hatred of his brothers; in his sudden change from the fond caresses of an indulgent father to the blows and tears and chains of slavery; in the vindictive persecution of his mistress; in suffering, though innocent, the penalty of guilt; in years of weary and long imprisonment; in the sense of injustice and cruel wrong; in the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick; in the prospect of wasting his youth and closing his unhappy days, unknown and unpitied, within the bars of a prison,—no man was more unfor-

tunate. Yet in whose history was the hand of Providence more visible! What perils—more formidable than these, what temptations—he escaped! His doom is to be slain—fate more horrible, to be starved to death, to pine away of hunger in the bottom of a darksome pit, with no ear to hear his moans nor hand to lend him help, yet he escapes. He is a slave, yet what slave so fortunate?—he is sold to a master who appreciates his worth, and bestows on the bondsman a confidence which few freemen enjoy. He is a prisoner, but the frowns of fortune are changed to smiles. He wins the regard of his jailer, and rises into an office of trust. Strange man, he is never down but ere long he is up again, rising like a life-buoy which, buried under a mountain of water, is soon riding triumphant on the top of the waves. Twice he is rescued from imminent death. Twice he escapes what seems hopeless imprisonment. The very cause that threw him down becomes a ladder by which he climbs to fortune—one dream consigns him to the pit, and another raises him to the palace.

What a revolution in his fate within the brief space of a single day! It had made other men dizzy. He exchanges a captive's chain for ornaments of gold, the prison garb for courtly vesture, the narrow walls of a jail for crowded streets through which, amid acclaims that rend the skies, he is borne in a royal chariot, heralds in advance opening the way and crying, "Bow the knee!" He was Potiphar's slave; he has become Potiphar's lord. He begged favors of a butler; the proudest princes of Egypt now live in his smiles and tremble at his frown. His word is law, his countenance is sunshine; and if we might make the comparison, as God, bestowing all grace through his beloved Son, says to sinners and suppliants, "Go to Jesus," Pha-

constituting Joseph the channel and minister and dispenser
royal favors, refers all affairs to him, saying, as we are told
l, "Go to Joseph." And thus in Joseph, once entreating
brothers for his life, once toiling through the desert sands,
y, weeping, captive boy, but now surrounded with royal

state, now married into a princely house, now the governor of Egypt, now the second man in the kingdom, now honored by the highest, loved by the humblest and regarded by all, from the monarch on his throne to the peasant that ploughed his field under the shadows of the pyramids and on the green banks of the Nile, as the saviour and benefactor of the land,—in this successful man we see, perhaps, the most remarkable illustration of the words of Solomon, "Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men."

Let us now trace Joseph's success to its sources. They were two:

1. It was due to God. The sun—for long time acknowledged to be the centre around which all the planets roll—is coming to be regarded also as the main source of those forces which, under different forms, play their different parts in the world. To him, for instance, the wheel on which some dashing stream flings itself, by its impetus and weight turning the grindstones of the mill or the whirring spindles of the factory, owes its power. It was his heat which raised the waters of the sea into vapor; floating in the realms of air, this vapor was condensed into clouds, and these descended in the rain which, gathered by a thousand rills into stream and river, sets all the wheels in motion. Not less to the sun we owe the wonders achieved by steam—our rapid flight on the iron rails, the victories it wins on the deep, the gigantic arms it moves in our service and at our bidding, where fires blaze and tall chimneys smoke. No doubt the moving force is, in the first instance, steam, but the steam is due to the fires of the furnace, and the fires of the furnace are maintained by the fuel it devours, and the fuel, whether wood of forests or coal from the bowels of earth, originally derived all its heat from the sun, wood and coal being magazines of sunbeams. This holds equally true of animal as of mechanical forces. The tiger leaps, the eagle soars, the elephant treads the forest with imperial foot, the fisherman pulls his oar, and the blacksmith swings his hammer on the sounding

forge—all, man and beast, by virtue of a force that descended from the skies. The strength, for example, of man's arm lies in its muscles; their strength we owe to our food; our food we owe to the earth; and its fruits owe their existence and nutritive properties to that sun whose heat and light clothe the naked soil with verdant pastures and the fields with their golden harvests.

By following a corresponding process, we would be conducted through many an intervening step to God himself, as the great final cause of all things and events. Universal Lord, Maker and Ruler of all, he is in all and over all; so that there is a sense in which not Joseph's fortunes only, but all things, are due to him. The life of angels, he is also the life of insects. The planets are rolled through space by the same hand that shapes every leaf and paints the humblest flower; and as "without him nothing was made that is made," so without him nothing happens that does happen, whether it be the fall of a kingdom or of a sparrow.

The footprints of a man are not more visible on the surface of new-fallen snow than are the proofs of a divine power and presence throughout all the kingdom of Nature; nor is there need to quote Scripture to prove and adduce crimes to illustrate our depravity, and how the "carnal mind is enmity against God," so long as we have philosophers, so called, who refer everything to mere material agencies, and excluding all recognition of a supreme Intelligence, recall these words of an apostle: "The world by wisdom knew not God."

What are the laws of nature for the sake of which God is thrust from his imperial throne, disowned and dishonored by the creatures of his hand? Law presupposes a law-maker—a mind to foresee the end and the appointment of means adequate to bring it about—to secure its accomplishment. And just as the laws of our country—to borrow a figure from society—are the expressions of the will of Parliament, what are the laws of nature, properly defined and traced to their native source, but the expression and outgoing of the will of God? That will, like

ours, works through the instrumentality of means; and "it is curious," says the duke of Argyll, in a profound and subtile book which he has published, called "The Reign of Law," "how the language of the grand seers of the Old Testament corresponds with this idea. They uniformly ascribe all the operations of nature—the greatest and the smallest—to the working of divine power. But they never revolt—as so many do in these weaker days—from the idea of this power working by wisdom and knowledge in the use of means, nor in this point of view do they ever separate between the work of creation and the work which is going on daily in the existing world. Exactly the same language is applied to the rarest exertions of power and to the gentlest and most constant of all natural operations. Thus, the saying that 'the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,' is coupled in the same breath with this other saying: 'By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.'" The Bible furnishes many other illustrations of this important remark of our noble author, one of which may be quoted for the beauty of its poetry and for its correct and scientific theory of rain. "Seek him," says the prophet Amos, "that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that *calleth the waters of the sea and poureth them out on the face of the earth:* the Lord is his name."

But while there is thus a sense in which all things may be attributed to God, and a sense even in which "he made the wicked for the day of evil," Joseph's history furnishes examples of special providence—if not of miraculous, of very marvelous as well as manifest, interpositions of God. "Who knoweth," said Mordecai to Esther, when urging that noble woman to risk life and all for the sake of her people—"who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" The special providence which seemed, though probable, still problematical to

Mordecai in Esther's fortunes, no man can doubt, held the helm of Joseph's. Though somewhat like the course of a boat, now riding upon the top of the waves and now lost in the trough of the sea, or like that of a traveler crossing a mountain region, who now stands on sunny heights and anon descends into the sombre depths of valleys, Joseph's course, with many ups and downs, goes right to its mark—from the point where he starts to the goal he reaches. How manifest is it in his case that a divine eye—none else could—saw the end from the beginning! By what a special providence did all the vicissitudes of his checkered life—those things men call accidents—like successive waves, bear him on and up to the position where he accomplished his singular destiny, saving his family, and through them the hope of the Messiah! What hand but one divine could have forged the chain which linked long years together—the sheepfolds of Hebron with the proud palaces of Egypt—the dreams of the boy with the deeds of the man? To take up but its principal links: he dreams, and becomes in consequence the object of his brothers' hatred; through their hatred he is sold into slavery; through slavery he enters the house of Potiphar; through events that happen in that house he is consigned to prison; in the prison he meets with one of Pharaoh's servants; in consequence of interpreting the servant's dream he is summoned to interpret his master's; and *that*, the last link of a chain which has its first far away in his father's tent, is fastened to the throne of Egypt.

"Surely," said the patriarch, "God is in this place." As surely God was in that plan. Perhaps, in most instances, he only interfered with the ordinary laws of nature to the extent of controlling them with a divine hand, as when he restrained Joseph for years from inquiring after his father, when a courier mounted on a dromedary would have brought him tidings of the old man in a very few days. That fact can only be explained by a special providence. And without a constant divine superintendence—a superintendence that wrought out its ends by many

instrumentalities, even by dreams and crimes and the cruelest, vilest passions that rage in human bosoms — how often had Joseph's fortunes been completely wrecked! No hand but God's could have steered his bark through the storms, shoals, reefs and quicksands of his romantic and eventful life; and well, therefore, might he acknowledge God in his remarkable success, saying to his brothers, "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

2. Under God his success was due to himself. There is a passage in Palgrave's "Central Arabia," on reading which I thought, "So Pharaoh and Joseph may have been seen." Palgrave tells how the street was filled with a great throng of people. There is a commotion in the crowd. Opening, it shows an armed band advancing. They form a circle that has its centre occupied by those whose dress, with the respectful distance observed by their followers, announces their superior rank. It is the monarch. His step is measured, his demeanor grave and somewhat haughty. His robe is a Cashmere shawl. He wears a rich turban on his head, and at his girdle a gold-mounted sword. He moved, a cloud of perfumes; and as he walked along his eye never rested, but flung eagle glances, rapid and brilliant, on the surrounding crowd. By his side walked one also wearing a sword, but mounted with silver, not with gold, and also richly dressed, though in somewhat less costly materials. This man's face was more remarkable than his attire. It wore a courtly expression and beamed with unusual intelligence. Of these two, the first was Telal, the king; the second, Zaniel, his treasurer, his prime minister, his sole minister. In this minister I saw Joseph at the right hand of Pharaoh. Their offices were alike. They resembled each other in this also, that both had risen to the highest from the humblest position in life. Joseph had been a slave, a prisoner, falsely accused and cruelly wronged. Zaniel had been an orphan, a ragged boy. His early years were passed in beggary; nor was

it by a mere wave of fortune that he was flung into his high position. He had climbed to it. He owed it to his admirable disposition, remarkable talents, unwearied industry, skill in business and extraordinary force of character. In this also the resemblance between the two was remarkable; for it was, under God, to his high moral and rare mental qualities, and not in any degree to chance or fortune, that the young Hebrew slave reached power and dignity, becoming governor of the kingdom which he had entered as a slave.

Not simply to the wind, however auspicious, does the seaman owe his progress. Without it, indeed, his ship would but rise and fall in the swell of the deep, but without the skill to catch and use the breeze, and compel it, even when adverse, by dextrous trimming of the yards and setting of the sails and handling of the helm, to force him on and over the waves, what service were the wind to him? So was it in Joseph's, and so is it in all cases of success. God gives the opportunities, but success turns on the use we make of them; on the promptitude with which we seize the openings of providence; on the weight of character we bring into the field; on the resolution and energy we throw into our business.

This is an important practical truth. And to illustrate it let me now show how Joseph possessed and employed those powers and properties which, if Providence, so to speak, affords a man the ordinary chances of life, will win and command success.

First of all—and to begin with that which gives the best foundation for prosperity in this world and the only assurance of salvation in the next—Joseph was a man of sterling piety and the most virtuous principles. Early instructed by a devout father, he never forgot the lessons of home and the God of his youth. So those who robbed him of his coat did not rob him of his character; nor, though reduced to slavery, could his mistress, by her frowns or favors, induce him to become the slave of sin. The young, when the only thing they should fear is

guilt, are often afraid to stand up for truth and virtue. Imitator of them, he was not: neither concealing his regard for God nor his horror of sin. By his piety and virtue he won the confidence of his heathen masters. They saw that the Lord was with him, and acknowledged the blessing of having, though he was but a bondsman, a pious servant beneath their roof.

Again, to the unsullied innocence of virtuous youth, Joseph united the wisdom and sagacity of age. An exception to the proverb that you cannot put an old head on young shoulders, with what cool skill and consummate foresight did he choose the steps necessary and most likely to attain his object! Thus by dextrous statesmanship he saved Egypt from the horrors of famine; he added to the power of the crown while preserving the people; he carried Pharaoh and the country safely through a tremendous crisis. And see how the sagacity which characterized his acts as a statesman appeared in the steps he took, and took with so much success, to awaken the consciences of his brethren, and bringing them to a sense of their sin, lay them true penitents at the feet of that God whose laws they had so grossly violated and of a brother they had so cruelly wronged!

Again, many people fail of success in their profession and pursuits by neglecting the opportunities which Providence presents. They are not prompt to seize them and turn them to the most advantage. But see how Joseph pushed in wherever he saw an opening. He has Pharaoh's butler for a fellow-prisoner. Something may come out of that. In this man, menial as he was, and as to the credit of Joseph's foresight it fell out, he may one day—to use a common expression in its literal as well as figurative sense—have "a friend at court." So, though it offered but what is called a chance, he does not allow the opportunity to escape. He bespeaks the good offices of the butler, teaching us, in our intercourse with mankind, never to make an enemy if we can avoid it, and when it is possible always to make a friend.

Again, observe how, sure token of his rising one day to be the

master of others, Joseph had acquired the mastery over himself. To the aid of piety he brought that strength of mind and resolution of purpose for lack of which, perhaps, men equally pious have yielded to temptations he stoutly resisted; have shamefully fallen where he stood; have lost the battle where he won a splendid victory. A grand thing—next to divine grace the grandest thing—to cultivate is decision of character. To that, in combination with the grace of God, Joseph owed it, I believe, that he came unscathed from the fiery furnace into which he was thrown in the house of Potiphar. On that resolute breast of his, temptations broke like sea waves on a rocky headland. Nor do his strength of purpose and the power he had acquired over himself appear less remarkable in other passages of his life. It is difficult for us with unfaltering tongue to read the affecting scenes that passed between him and his brothers ere he dropped the mask. What his strength of mind who could go through them without a trace of emotion! He is racked with anxiety about his aged father; his bosom swells to the bursting at the sight of brothers to whom he yearns to disclose himself, that he may lock them in fond embraces. Yet he preserves a calm, and if not cold, an unimpassioned, bearing—like a mountain whose head is crowned with snows, and whose sides are mantled with green forests and vineyards and groves of olives, while the fires of a volcano are raging within its bosom.

Lastly, there remains one feature of Joseph's character deserving of special notice. Along with an iron will, and an energy no task could daunt, no labor weary, no burden crush, he had a gentle, tender, loving heart. Unselfish, he was ready to sympathize with others. One day, for instance, when they seemed more than usually depressed, how kindly does he ask his fellow-prisoners, "Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?" Then what a tender heart his, who, enduring wrong in Potiphar's house with the silent heroism of a martyr, throws himself, in yonder palace, into the arms of his brethren and weeps over them like a woman!

I have no doubt whatever that to the generous, kindly, loving disposition which Joseph possessed, and all should cultivate, he owed not a little of his remarkable success. It won the regards and good will of others, kind affections often doing men such service as the arms which a creeping plant throws around a pole does it, when, springing from the ground, it rises by help of the very object it embraces.

Such was Joseph. Just because he was such, God opening up his way and blessing him, he was a successful man.

There was once a sailor, the only survivor of a shipwreck, who had a singular fate. Caught in the arms of a mountain billow as it went rolling to break in spray and snowy foam on an Orcadian headland, he was not dashed to pieces, but flung right into the mouth of a vast sea-cave, where the wave left him "safe and sound." His fortune, if possible, was stranger still. On recovering from his shock and groping about, he found a barrel of provisions the same wave had swept in. With this and water trickling from the roof to quench his thirst, he sustained life, till, hearing a human cry mingling with the clang of sea-birds, a brave cragsman of these isles was swung over the precipice, and rescued him from his rocky prison. A wonderful providence! But it was no such wave of fortune that cast Joseph into the high post he filled.

An example for men to imitate, he owed nothing to fortune, but, under God, everything to himself—to his piety, his pure and high morality, his extraordinary self-control, the patience with which he bore, the faith with which he waited, the perseverance with which he pursued his objects, an iron will and an indomitable energy. These are properties which by prayer and pains the young should seek to acquire, and the oldest should assiduously cultivate. To these, more than to genius or to great talents, or to any of those things which are called good fortune, the greatest of men have ascribed their success. I could produce a hundred testimonies to that effect, but none better than the one

with which I now close this paper. In a letter to his son, Sir Fowell Buxton, a great and eminently Christian man, says, "You are now at that period of life in which you must make a turn to the right or the left. You must now give proof of principle, determination and strength of mind, or you must sink into idleness, and acquire the habits and character of an ineffective young man. I am sure that a young man may be very much what he pleases. In my own case it was so. Much of my happiness and all my prosperity in life have resulted from the change I made at your age." Elsewhere he says, "The longer I live, the more I am certain that the great difference between men, between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant, is energy, invincible determination—a purpose once fixed, and then death or victory!"





# VIII.

## JOB.

YE have heard of the patience of Job," says an apostle, "and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate, and of tender mercy." The character of Job, which is usually brought forward as an example of patient submission to the afflictions of life and of steadfast trust in God amidst the severest trials, is hardly less conspicuous for humble dependence upon him, strict adherence to his worship and service, and compassionate care of the needy and unfortunate amidst those temptations with which men of high stations and overflowing opulence are beset. The wealth of Job is estimated, according to the manner of those simple times, by the number of his flocks and herds and the multitude of his family and dependants, and he is declared in these respects to have surpassed in riches all the men of the East. But the power and influence he possessed over his countrymen, and the honor in which he was held, did not proceed merely from his wealth, but also from the high character he bore for wisdom, integrity and beneficence. When he "went out to the gate," and prepared his seat in the street — *i. e.*, when he sat as judge or arbiter, to hear such causes as were brought to his decision—"the young saw, and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up; the chief men refrained talking, and the nobles held their peace: he chose out their way, and sat as chief" among them.

Job was also, as was the custom of patriarchal times, the faith-

ful priest of his household—watching over the conduct of his children, and offering daily prayers and sacrifices according to their number, lest peradventure they might in their festivities have fallen away from God and incurred his displeasure. His superfluous wealth he employed in ministering to the necessities of others, and his power was exerted in redressing the grievances of the oppressed. He "delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him; he was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor. The cause that he knew not he searched out; he brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth." Such was Job, "in the days when," as he describes them, "God preserved him, and his candle shined upon his head. By the light of God he walked through darkness; the secret of the Lord was upon his tabernacle; the Almighty was with him."

But it pleased God, who chooses out for all the lot of their inheritance, to visit Job with sad reverses. By a sudden incursion of a band of predatory Arabs, on the boundary of whose country Job lived, and by one of those furious tempests of the elements which are not uncommon in that quarter of the world, he was at once deprived of his whole substance and of his numerous family of children. Thus was he plunged from the height of worldly prosperity into utter destitution, and he who was lately surrounded by sons and daughters found himself alone in the world. Yet his conduct under these overwhelming losses evinced the utmost magnanimity and pious resignation. He felt deeply the calamities which had thus befallen him, but he had recourse to the true and only refuge. "He fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I forth, and naked shall I return to the earth: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

But the Almighty, who has constituted this life a state of trial

and discipline—who, in preparing sinful man for future glory, has made suffering the necessary preparative for enjoyment, and abasement the means of still higher exaltation—was pleased to add to the load of distress which had thus fallen upon his faithful servant, by subjecting him to severe and loathsome bodily disease. Even this visitation did not at its first infliction extort a single complaint from the lips of Job. "Shall we receive good," said he, "at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

It appears astonishing that the mind of any of the frail sons of men should have been able to sustain the sudden shock of such a weight of woe; and yet it may be questioned whether the difficulty be not still greater, of sustaining with firmness and patient resignation the wearisome days and nights which succeed the first attack of lingering but hopeless disease, aggravated, as in this case it was, by so many mournful recollections. It was this *continuance* of bodily and mental suffering, more than the violence of its first shock, which appears, from the account which Job himself gives of his situation, to have borne the most heavily upon him, and to have gone the farthest toward unhinging his mind. To all the other causes of distress there is one to be added, which never fails to accompany the fall of the prosperous, and that is the desertion of false friends and the cold neglect shown by those who formerly were foremost with their services and flatteries. This is an evil which, abstractly considered, appears trivial when compared with many others, and yet it is almost always found to strike deep into the heart that is already pressed with other misfortunes, and to excite painful complaints where greater calamities are borne with patience. We find that Job was not insensible to the pain arising from the changed deportment of friends and dependants. "I am made," says he, "to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning

of the day." "My bones are pierced in me in the night season, and my sinews take no rest." "My kinsfolk" also "have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house count me as a stranger. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer." "Yea, young children have despised me," "and they whom I loved are turned against me."

Certain friends, however, Job had, who, we are informed, "made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him." The religious views entertained by these friends, sincere as they no doubt were in the sentiments they professed, were not, however, such as rendered their visit a source of consolation to the sufferer. Pressed with the difficulties which beset that great question, the origin of evil—a question which in all ages of the world has proved the fruitful source of gloomy doubts and rash speculations—and not sufficiently adverting to the preparatory nature of the present state of existence, and the necessity and value of afflictions in the present life, as the means of preparing creatures of corrupted nature for the pure and exalted enjoyments of a heavenly and eternal state, these friends of the patriarch, sincere in their belief of a wise and righteous Providence superintending the conduct and ordering the lot of all, and zealous to justify God's dealings, considered it necessary for that purpose to maintain that the blessings and the evils of the present state, whatever appearances to the contrary may exist, are, in truth, distributed by divine Providence exactly according to men's deserts. The doctrine which they held, so far as it seems consistent with itself, amounts to this, that the present life is, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, a state of retribution, that the justice of God requires that prosperity and happiness should be the lot only of the good, and that none but wicked persons can be the subjects of severe or extraordinary sufferings. The changes which take place in the lot of the same individual, with many other circumstances observable in human condition, obliged them, indeed, to acknowledge that this principle which

they held must be received under certain limitations, which it did not belong to man to inquire too curiously into, and they were ready to silence all doubts and objections, grounded on such circumstances, by summary appeals to the absolute sovereignty of God.[1] But considering their doctrine as infallibly true to this extent, that a remarkable change from prosperity to adversity cannot, without impeaching the justice of God, be supposed to take place for any such purpose as that of trial and discipline, but only as a judgment or punitive visitation, they of consequence maintained that Job's conduct must, in order to draw down such an accumulation of misery, have been singularly wicked and displeasing to God.

We need not much wonder at the nature of the doctrine thus held by the friends of Job, for there seems a proneness in human nature to form the same unjustifiable conclusion respecting such dispensations of Providence, happening in the case of others, as chance to be of a nature suddenly and singularly afflictive. We have an example of this, taken notice of by our Saviour himself, who takes the opportunity of authoritatively contradicting the conclusion as founded in error. "Suppose ye," says he to his disciples, "that those Galileans" (whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices) "were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay." "Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them; think ye that they were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." Job's friends, however, entertained that common view of such matters which our Saviour here denounces as false, and accordingly, in perfect consistency with it, they desired to bring Job to an acknowledgment of that extraordinarily iniquitous conduct which they inferred he must have been guilty of, in order to draw down such an extraordinary weight of calamity upon his head. And as they were well aware

[1] "The three aged friends are the 'liars for God,' the dogged defenders of the traditional popular belief."—STANLEY.

that his external conduct had been not only fair and reputable, but even highly praiseworthy, they concluded that all this must have been mere hypocrisy on his part, intended to cloak a secret course of iniquity. Holding these opinions, we cannot much wonder that they should have endeavored to bring Job to a confession of the guilt they confidently imputed to him, as the first and necessary step toward his making his peace with God and obtaining a mitigation of the heavy judgments sent upon him. "Is not thy wickedness," said they, "great, and thine iniquities excessive? Hast thou not taken a pledge from thy brother for naught, and stripped the destitute of their clothing? Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and hast withholden bread from the hungry." "Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee." "Thou hast said, How doth God know?—can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not." "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden, who were cut down out of time, whose foundations were overthrown with a flood?"

It may be readily perceived that this course of proceeding on the part of Job's friends, however well intended, entitled them to any character rather than that of comforters; nor can we conceive anything more trying to the patience of one overwhelmed by calamities, who was at the same time conscious, amidst many failings, of the sincerity of his heart toward God, and of the uprightness and beneficence of his general conduct. If Job, then, bending to the earth under all the miseries of his condition, and now, in addition to all his other sufferings, charged with hypocrisy and unknown crimes, and that by friends whom he knew to be sincerely pious men, did at times betray fretfulness, and speak unadvisedly with his lips in justification of himself, what shall we venture to say of such occasional expressions, except that this venerable patriarch, "perfect and upright" as he is declared to

have been—"one that feared God, and eschewed evil"—was still but a man? Only One ever bore the human form and underwent sufferings equal to those of Job—sufferings, indeed, with which those of Job cannot be compared—without betraying weakness; and he was not mere man: "there is none" absolutely "good but one, that is, God."

Throughout the general tenor of Job's answers to the accusations of his friends, and the long disputation which he held with them, we find the soundest views of God's providence displayed, and the most submissive feelings. He maintains uniformly the true scriptural doctrine respecting the varieties of human condition and the alternations of prosperity and adversity; that these are not to be held as the certain marks or measure of God's favor or displeasure, neither are they to be considered as promiscuously or accidentally distributed, but that all the goods and ills of life are appointed by a wise and kind Providence for important and beneficent ends, though, from the imperfection of our faculties and the narrow sphere of our knowledge, the proceedings of Heaven must often appear dark and intricate. He is far from grounding his justification of himself against the charges of his friends upon any such presumptuous imagination as that of absolute rectitude, nor does he charge God foolishly, as if he had met with injustice at *his* hand. "I have sinned," he exclaims; "what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Though I *were* righteous, yet would I not answer; but I would *make supplication* to my Judge." But "thou knowest that I am not wicked"—*i. e.*, not wicked in the sense according to which he was charged by his friends, not guilty of hypocrisy and the other crimes imputed to him: "my step hath not turned out of the way, nor mine heart walked after mine eyes, nor hath any blot cleaved to mine hands." There is also the most uniform and fervent expression, throughout, of resignation and reliance on God. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

And that this hope was full of immortality—a hope bottomed on the only sure foundation—the following remarkable words abundantly testify: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

At the same time it must be confessed that expressions did, on some trying occasions in the course of the disputation, drop from his lips, betraying despondency and fretfulness, and not altogether devoid of presumption. "Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even then it would please God to cut me off." "Let the day perish wherein I was born; let that day be darkness." "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God: I would order my cause before him. Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me." These, and suchlike despairing and irreverent expressions, wrung from Job by the severity of his misfortunes, aggravated by the unjust charges of his friends, did not escape the ear of the Almighty, who granted, to his confusion, the rash desire he had expressed, that he would answer him. The God of heaven manifested himself to the disputants, and settled their controversy, by sanctioning with his approval the views which Job had taken of the measures of his administration, sharply reproving him, at the same time, for the weakness and rashness which he had occasionally displayed. Nothing can be more sublime and impressive than the views displayed by the Almighty of his own universal and absolute sovereignty, his unsearchable wisdom, and the grandeur of the whole scheme of creation and providence. Abashed and confounded at his own presumptuous folly, in having dared so boldly to enter upon matters too high for man, and even to desire an opportunity of reasoning with his Maker, Job exclaims, "Lo, I am vile: what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but

I will not reply; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And when the Almighty was pleased still further to place before him a representation of the vast variety of his works, with the many difficulties, unfathomable to human understanding, with which even the visible creation abounds, Job seems to sink under the sense of his own utter impotence and vileness. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

But although it pleased the Almighty thus to reprove and effectually to humble his servant, that his soul might be further purified from the remains of corruption, and rendered capable of still higher exaltation and enjoyment in his own presence for ever, he administered a still sharper rebuke to his friends, and directed them to accept Job's intercession for them, that they might escape further punishment. "Offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." This was the commencement of brighter prospects to the suffering patriarch. The thick clouds of adversity began to dissolve; and it pleased God to testify, by his restoration to temporal prosperity, his approbation of the religious sentiments he had expressed, and of the trust in his providence and patient submission with which he had undergone the severe trials to which he had been subjected. "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning;" "and he lived after this an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations." And thus shall he abundantly recompense, if not in this life, certainly in the next, all who endure patiently, committing the keeping of their souls unto him in well-doing. It is the privilege of such to look forward confidently to their union with them who are come out of great tribulation, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and who, with praise and joy, surround his throne for ever and ever.

# IX.

## MOSES.

TAKE him for all in all, regard him not in one but many aspects, Moses is the greatest character in history, sacred or profane.

As a *writer*, for example, he takes precedence of the most venerable authors of antiquity. Consecrating, so to speak, the press, the first book types ever printed was a copy of the Holy Scriptures; and in beautiful harmony with that remarkable providence, it is more than probable that the first book pen ever wrote was one of the five of which Moses was the author. Certain it is that if his were not the first ever written—written long ages before Herodotus composed his history or Homer sang his poems—his are the oldest books extant. Before all others in point of time, what author occupies himself with themes of such surpassing grandeur? Like one who had met God face to face within the cloudy curtains of the awful mount, he introduces us into the counsels of the Almighty, and records events which, receding into a past and stretching forward into a future eternity, had God for their author, the world for their theatre, and for their end the everlasting destinies of mankind. Apart from the surpassing grandeur of his subjects, even in the very manner of handling them, the world's oldest is its foremost writer. What other poet rises to heights or sustains a flight so lofty as Moses—in his dying song, for instance, his parting words to the tribes of Israel ere he ascended Nebo to wave them his last farewell and

vanish for ever from their wondering, weeping gaze? The inimitable pathos of his style as illustrated in the story of Joseph, the tears and trembling voices of readers in all ages have acknowledged. In simple, tender, touching narrative, no passages in any other book will compare with it; and yet so wide and varied is his range that the writings of Moses contain—infidels themselves being judges—the sublimest expressions man has spoken or penned. By universal consent, for example, no other book, ancient or modern, the production of the highest mind and of the most refined and cultivated age, contains a sentence so sublime as this: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

Again, as a *divine*, compared to his knowledge of the attributes and character of God, how gross the notions of the heathen! how puerile, dim and distorted the speculations of their greatest sages! The wisest of them look like men with unsteady steps and outstretched arms groping for truth in the dark. As to the mass of people, they imputed crimes and vices to their gods which would now-a-days consign men to the gallows or banish them from decent society. But how pure, and comprehensive also, Moses' estimate of the divine character—of what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of men! Since his day—removed from our own by almost four thousand years—science has made prodigious strides; but those who have discovered new elements, new forces, new worlds, new stars, new suns, have brought to light no new attribute of God, nor a single feature of his character with which Moses was not acquainted. During these long ages philosophers and divines have been studying morals, the duties men owe to God and to each other, the laws that bind society and hold its parts together; but they who have added a thousand truths to science and a thousand inventions to art have not discovered any duties which Moses overlooked, or added so much as one law to his code of morals. Yet he had no Bible, as we have, whereby to acquaint himself with God; nor was he reared, like us, in a Christian land, but among those who,

with all their boasted learning, worshiped the ox and serpent, beasts of the field, fowls of the air and creeping things—divinities so innumerable that it was said there were more gods than men in Egypt. Let the character of his age and the circumstances in which he lived be taken into account, and he is the greatest of divines; nor does his sublime knowledge of God, of the mysteries of religion and of the moralities of life admit of any but one explanation. The glory of his writings and of his face are to be traced to the same source. He was admitted into the secret counsels of the Eternal, and spake, like other holy men of old, as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

Again, as a *leader and legislator* Moses occupies a place no other man has approached, far less attained to. History records no such achievements as his who, without help from man, struck the fetters off a million and more of slaves; placing himself at their head, led them forth from the land of bondage; reducing them to order, controlled more turbulent and subdued more stubborn elements than any before or since have had to deal with; formed a great nation out of such base materials; and casting into the shade the celebrated retreat of the ten thousand Greeks, conducted to a successful issue the longest and hardest march on record—a march continued for forty years in the face of formidable enemies, through howling wildernesses and desert sands. Then look at the sacred and secular polity which he established in Israel! That constitution which makes England so prominent among nations has been, like an oak, the slow growth of ages, and it was often only after long and sometimes bloody struggles that right there prevailed over might, and laws were established that render equal justice to all classes of the community. But, event unparalleled in any other age or country, Moses established in Israel a form of government and a code of laws which neither time nor experience has been able to improve. Like the goddess fabled to have sprung, full grown and full armed, from the head of Jupiter, or like those who never hung on mother's breast, the

man and woman whom Eden received to its blissful bowers, it was mature and perfect from the beginning. What a man was he who, in that rude and early age, inculcated laws that have formed, through all succeeding ages, the highest standard of morality! Since his long-distant day men have run to and fro and knowledge has been increased; the boundaries of science have been vastly extended, but not those of morality; nor has one new duty been added to those of the two tables he brought down from Sinai. A perfect code of morals, adapted to all ages, circumstances and countries, time has neither altered nor added to the Ten Commandments.

The ten stones of the arch on which our domestic happiness, the purity of society, the security of life and property and the prosperity of nations stand, it was these commandments the Son of God came from heaven, our substitute, to obey; with his blood, not to abrogate, but to enforce them; on his cross to exalt, not in his tomb to bury, them; and cementing the shattered arch with his precious blood, to lend to laws that had the highest authority of Sinai the no less solemn and more affecting sanctions of Calvary.

As a legislator, besides moral, Moses established criminal and civil, laws, which, unless in so far as they were specially adapted to the circumstances of the Israelites, our senators and magistrates would do well to copy. Inspired with the profoundest wisdom, they are patterns to all ages of equity and justice. For instance, how much kinder to the poor, and less burdensome to the community, than ours, are what may be called the "poor laws" of Moses! How much more wise than ours those that dealt with theft—thus far that, requiring the thief to restore fourfold the value of what he had stolen, and work till he had done so, they assigned to that crime a punishment which at once secured reparation to the plundered and the reformation of the plunderer! Nor less wise, I may add, those sanitary laws of which, though long neglected, late years and bitter experience

have been teaching us the importance. It is only now, with all our boasted progress in arts and science, that we are awaking to the value of such regulations as, securing cleanliness in the habits and in the homes of the people, promote their health and preserve their lives. Anticipating the discoveries of the nineteenth century and the plans of our modern sanitary reformers, Moses was four thousand years ahead of his age. Judged, therefore, either by the civil or criminal code he enjoined, or by those Ten Commandments which lie at the foundations of all human justice, and shall continue the supreme standard of morals so long as time endures, Moses claims precedence over all the sovereigns and senators and legislators the world has seen.

As a *philosopher*, notwithstanding the audacious attacks now making on his narrative of the Creation, I venture to say that Moses, as he was first in the point of time, is the first in point of rank. He fills in the temple of science that high priestly office his brother held in the temple of religion. How sublime, for example, his account of Creation compared with the monstrous fables and puerile conceits current among pagan nations! I know, indeed, no greater contrast than that between the childish, monstrous and often immodest mythologies of India, Egypt, Greece and Rome, and those opening pages of the Book of Genesis where God appears on the scene—calling creation into being by his simple but almighty word; establishing order amid unimaginable confusion; evoking light out of primeval darkness; assigning their different offices to the elements of earth and the shining orbs of heaven; building up the grand pyramid of Nature, and on its lofty apex placing man, made in his own image and enthroned lord of all. Believe some, and this is all a fancy, a mere fable. Foiled at every point and on every occasion where they employed history and mental or moral science to attack the Christian faith; compelled also to acknowledge that the most formidable skeptics of other days, Hobbes and Voltaire, David Hume and Tom Paine—without followers now save among the

dregs of society—were ignominiously defeated, the infidels of our day have changed their plan of attack. Obliged to seek new weapons, they are now attempting to overthrow the authority of Moses by the authority of physical science; and ever as some old bone, some fragment of ancient pottery, some stone axe or arrow-head, turns up which they fancy will serve their purpose, there is great shouting in the camp of the Philistines, and fear seizes some that "the ark of God is taken." A bone in Samson's hand, the jawbone even of an ass, once did great execution, as did also the piece of pottery which a woman from the beleaguered wall pitched on the head of Abimelech, smiting him to the ground. But the enemies of our faith, though using similar weapons, have not achieved equal success. Looking at the future in the light of the past, we can only wonder at the timidity of those who fear these assaults, and at the credulity of such as, however fond of novelties, allow such crude and silly arguments to seduce them from the faith.

For example, a few years since a human jawbone was paraded before the world. It was said to have been dug out of a gravel-bed in France of so great antiquity that the person to whom it belonged must have existed many thousand years antecedent to the period at which Moses places the first appearance of man on the earth. Well, this bone, whose vast age was to demolish the authority of the Bible, being sawn asunder, was examined; and with what result? Its internal condition demonstrated that, instead of being older than the age of Adam, it was but a few—even if a few—years older than those who were more the dupes of their own hatred to religion than of the workmen that had stolen this fragment of mortality from a churchyard and palmed it off on these credulous skeptics.

There is another and similar fact, much too instructive to be left in the oblivion to which mortified and defeated infidels would fain consign it. Years ago a brick was found on the banks of the Nile, but many feet beneath their surface. These banks are

formed of the slimy and fertile mud which each annual overflow deposits in the green valley of that famous river; and assuming —for all the theories opposed to Christianity are full of assumptions as the basis of their calculations—that these deposits have been of the same thickness, one year with another, from the most remote antiquity, such was the depth at which this brick was found, that it must have been made many thousand years before the time at which Moses fixes the creation of man. So infidels alleged and argued. How they told this in Gath and published it in the streets of Ashkelon! With this brick they had inflicted a blow on the head of Moses from which he could not possibly recover—with him not "Babylon the Great," but the faith of Christendom, had fallen. Well, the defenders of the faith were puzzled and not a little perplexed. It was not easy to prove that the deposits of the Nile were irregular, and that the foundations, therefore, on which the attack rested were unsound. But, teaching us not to allow our confidence in the faith to be easily shaken by things which are at first, and even may continue, inexplicable, the problem was at length solved. The difficulty was finally and authoritatively removed. This famous brick fell into the hands of one familiar with the works of antiquity, and above all others expert in determining their age. He examined it, and proved to demonstration that, however it got buried in the valley of the Nile, or whatever be the rate of increase in the river's alluvial deposits, that brick did not carry us back to ages antecedent to Mosaic history. It was of Roman manufacture, and belonged to an age no older than the Cæsars.

Christianity does not teach science, nor profess to teach it. It was for another and higher purpose that its pages were inspired. To serve its own proper and important end, it adapted its language to the times and the understandings of those it addressed. And though, in consequence of this, there were statements in the Bible which could not be reconciled with the modern discoveries of science, these should not have the weight of a feather against

the historical, the external and internal, the miraculous and prophetical evidences on which its divinity stands, and has stood unshaken the assaults of two thousand years.

But, in truth, the greater the progress of science, the more manifest is the harmony between its revelations and those of the word of God.

For instance, Moses represents the earth as having been, antecedent to the present epoch, *without form and void*—an expression denoting a state of extreme and violent confusion, of death and drear desolation. And how is his statement not confuted, but corroborated, by the remarkable discoveries of the nineteenth century? The very same story is written on the rocks which we read in the book of Genesis. The solid strata above which we walk, build our houses and reap our harvests have been explored by the light of science, and in their strange contortions, irregularities and confusion, and those remains of innumerable and extinct creatures that, retaining the postures of a violent and sudden death, have been entombed within their stony sepulchres, they present a most remarkable commentary on Holy Writ.

Again, in the last days, according to St. Peter, there were scoffers to arise, asserting "that all things remain as they were from the beginning of the creation." So said David Hume; and so still say those who, in opposition to Moses and to the miracles of Scripture, take their stand on the uniform successions and invariable operations of the laws of Nature. But here the philosopher's geology and our theology are at one. The most novel discoveries of our age are in harmony with the oldest statements of revelation. They prove that there have been no such invariable operations as would exclude the possibility or probability of miracles. They demonstrate what Moses asserts, that all things have not remained as they were from the beginning. They show causes even now at work sufficient in the course of time to bring about the grand catastrophe that, with a God in judgment and a world in flames, shall usher in a new era—"the

new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Again, the Bible teaches us that the world is "reserved unto fire," and what it long ages ago revealed is the conclusion to which the discoveries of science are now tending. In proof of that, see what one of our greatest modern philosophers, who has certainly never stood forth as a defender of the faith, says. He maintains that through the agency of volcanoes and other active causes, "the foundations of our earth shall be so weakened that its crust, shaken and rent by reiterated convulsions, must in the course of time fall in." "When we consider," says Sir Charles Lyell, "the combustible nature of the elements of the earth; the facility with which their compounds may be decomposed and enter into new combinations; the quantity of heat which they evolve during these processes; when we recollect the expansive power of steam, and that water itself is composed of two gases which, by their union, produce intense heat; when we call to mind the number of explosive and detonating compounds which have been already discovered,—we may be allowed to share the astonishment of Pliny that a single day should pass without a general conflagration: *Excedit profecto, omnia miracula, ullum diem fuisse, quo non cuncta conflagrarent.*"

Again, and to take one other example from Moses' account of the Creation, he represents light as having been formed before the sun was hung in heaven to rule the day, or the moon to rule the night. According to him, ere day or night was, God sent forth the *fiat*, "Let there be light, and there was light." And taking their stand on an apparent impossibility, infidels have challenged the soundness of his philosophy, asking, in tones of undisguised triumph, How could there be light before and without the sun? Well, this was a difficulty. Satisfied on other and impregnable grounds of the truth of the sacred narrative, Christians felt confident that the objection admitted of an answer; but till science came to the rescue, such answers as they attempted

were more ingenious than satisfactory. The difficulty, however, has vanished, and Moses' account, no longer a subject for cavilling, is found to be in perfect harmony with the discoveries and the doctrines of modern science. Inspired of God, he anticipated our tardy discoveries. Relating that light was created before the sun appeared, he represents it as an element existing independently of that luminary. And so it does. This is now all but universally admitted, light being regarded as the effect of the undulations of an ether which, infinitely subtile and elastic, pervades all space, and finds but exciting causes in electricity and combustion, the sun and stars.

In taking leave of Moses as a philosopher, I have one more remark to make—one inexplicable unless he were inspired. It was thousands of years before the telescope was invented and Galileo had turned it on the starry heavens; before Newton had discovered the laws of gravitation; before anatomists had studied the structure of a fossil bone; before geologists had explored the bowels and strata of our earth; it was long ages, in fact, before true science was born, that Moses lifted the veil from the mysteries of Creation, stating facts in regard to its order and laws and phenomena that are in perfect harmony with the greatest discoveries of our day. Surely, as he was the first, he is the greatest, of philosophers; as well the greatest philosopher as the greatest writer, divine, leader and lawgiver the world has seen.

Let us now regard him as a *patriot*. There are those who do not believe in patriotism, treating it as some of our popular novelists, whose works are appropriately called "works of fiction," do religion. Unable to understand religion, they can only caricature it. Whenever any of their characters, man or woman, is introduced as using the language of piety, or as belonging to what, borrowing an expression from the ribald words of Robert Burns, they call the *unco gude*, that person they invariably represent as either a fool or a hypocrite, weak or wicked. If their defence is that they, painting from life, have described

religious people as they found them, we might reply they had been very unfortunate in their company, and that, as was likely to happen with men of their type, they must have been much more familiar with the dross than the gold of religious society. But their bad opinion of such as make a marked profession of piety may be otherwise accounted for. "Thou thoughtest," says God to the wicked, "that I was altogether such an one as thyself;" and feeling, with minds at enmity with God and averse to the practice of holiness and virtue, that they themselves should be hypocrites were they to assume a strict profession, they judge others by themselves. Nor are they singular in the use of so false a standard. Profligates and libertines do not believe in the existence of virtue, regarding it in others as a mere pretence, nothing else than the paint which hides the blotches on the face of vice. Neither do thieves, I may observe, believe in honesty. Nor do selfish men believe in generosity. Many politicians, the heads or tools of parties, though not steeped in such corruption as that minister of the last century who boasted that he knew the price of every member of the House of Commons, have only sought their own aggrandizement when they talked loudest of their country, its liberties, its honor and its interests. And no wonder that men without a spark of patriotism in their own breasts should doubt its existence in others!

Presenting a noble contrast to the proverb long common in Italy, *Dolce far niente*—"It is sweet to indulge in idleness"—the old Roman sang, *Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori*—"It is sweet and graceful to die for one's country;" and one of these old Romans is said, when it was only by such a sacrifice that Rome could be spared, to have rode out of its gates full armed in sight of weeping thousands, and taking brave farewell of brothers, friends and countrymen, to have spurred his steed into the gulf that closed its monstrous jaws on horse and rider. The lofty patriotism of the poet may be only the sentimentalism of song, and the hero of the gulf only such a fable as adorns traditionary

lore. But Moses was a patriot of that type. He shrunk from no sacrifice required by the good of his people.

How the Americans were extolled when, in a battle between the Chinese and the English, they remained not mere spectators, but mingled boldly in the fight, which, indeed, was not merely England's quarrel, but that of civilization against semi-barbarism. Hoisting anchor and spreading sail, they took their places in the fray, saying, "Blood is thicker than water!" It was in such another act that Moses' patriotism first burst out into flame. Neither his rank as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter and probable successor to her father's throne, nor his education as a prince of Egypt, nor the pride and pomp and pleasures of a palace, had made him ashamed of his race, or indifferent to their cruel sufferings. His brave mother, in her assumed character of a nurse, had probably told her boy the story of his people and of their wrongs, swearing him to fidelity, and sowing in his young heart the seeds of that piety and patriotism which afterward determined his choice. Though apparently dormant for forty years, as has happened in cases of conversion, the seed a mother's hand sowed at length sprang up. He began to feel and take a deep interest in his people. Their sufferings haunted his pillow by night and engaged his anxious thoughts by day. The fire, so to speak, was laid, and it needed but a spark, the touch of a match, to kindle it—a purpose served by a sight he one day happened to see. Concealing his object, he had gone "out to his brethren to look on their burdens," when it chanced that an Egyptian was smiting a Hebrew. He looked. He felt every blow that fell on the poor crouching slave. The fated hour had come. Plucking off the mask which had for a while concealed his secret, he flung himself into the fray, and bestriding his prostrate compatriot, with flashing eye faced the Egyptian and smote him dead. Life he risks; safety, riches, honors, rank and perhaps a crown he casts away—all to right the wrongs of a bleeding slave, in whom his piety recognized a child of God,

and his patriotism a countryman and a brother. In the words of St. Paul, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

This, if it could not be called his early, was now his only, choice. Unlike many who, yielding to the generous impulses of youth, espouse the cause of the wronged and fight their first battles under the flag of liberty, but in maturer years or old age live to desert it, Moses, henceforth, never swerved from the good part he had chosen. He pursued it onward to his grave with a pure, unselfish patriotism no time could weaken nor injustice and ingratitude cool. If ever man was tempted to abandon a cause which he had undertaken, it was he. Why should he have entered on it, and left his happy household and the quiet hills of Midian, to cast himself into a sea of troubles? Other actors have been hissed from the stage where they were once applauded; other benefactors have had to complain of public ingratitude; and under the impulse of a temporary madness other nations have brought their truest patriots to the scaffold. But for forty long years what reward else than abuse, murmurs, opposition, unjust suspicion and repeated attempts on his life, did Moses receive from those for whom he had rejected the most splendid offers, on whose behalf he had made the costliest sacrifices? If patriotism is to be measured not only by the wrongs it bears, but by the sacrifices it makes, he stands far ahead of all whose deeds grateful nations have commemorated in monumental marble or poets have enshrined in song.

Take, for example, the unselfish, for its generosity and self-denial the matchless, part he acted at Sinai, when the idolatry of Israel had awoke all the terrors of the mount, and God himself, provoked beyond all patience, was about to descend, to sweep man, woman and child from the face of the earth. "Let me

alone," said Jehovah, addressing Moses, who, forgetting the wrongs he had suffered at their hands, had thrown himself between the people and an angry God—"let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Nor was that all. "And I," he added, "will make of thee a great nation." A splendid offer!—yet one which, not on this only, but also on another occasion, Moses declined, turning twice from a crown to fall on his knees and pour out his whole soul to God in earnest prayers for the guilty people. He did more—far more. Deeply as he abhorred their conduct toward Jehovah, keenly as he felt their ingratitude to himself, he returned from their camp to tell God that he could not, and did not wish to, outlive them. "Oh, this people," he cried, "have sinned a great sin, and have made their gods of gold; yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin!" But what if God will not?—then with such patriotism as, with the exception of Paul's, never burnt in human bosom or burst from human lips, he exclaimed, "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book!" I will sink or swim with my people! If they are to perish, let me not live to see it.

It is no disparagement to Moses' patriotism that we are told that he "had respect unto the recompense of the reward." For what is that but in other words to say that he walked by faith and not by sight, and sacrificing a present for a much greater though future benefit, trod the path by which all goodness and greatness are attained. The ardent student who, stealing hours from sleep, bends his pallid face and lofty brow over the midnight lamp, and spends the time others give to youthful follies in holding converse with the mighty dead, is in the honors and laurels that crown such toils looking for a recompense of reward. The soldier who leaves home for a foreign shore to hold his weary watch while brothers and sisters are locked in the sweet arms of slumber—who, while plenty loads their table, endures hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness—who carries his colors into the smoke of battle or plants them on the summit of the

deadly breach—is also, in the fame or fortune that reward such heroism, looking for a recompense of reward. Thus likewise do thousands who, to enjoy ease and a competency in the evening of their days, practice a rigid economy, denying themselves pleasures in which many others indulge. Man, unlike the lower animals, whose eyes are naturally bent on the ground, with his noble and upright form, is made to look upward and forward; and there the student, the soldier, the prudent man of business, looking beyond the present hour, apply to worldly matters the very principle that in the region of spiritual things raises a child of God above the world and leads him to look beyond it. To what but to their allowing the present to dominate over the future is the ruin of sinners in almost every instance to be traced? They sacrifice, to the gratification of a moment or an hour, their peace, their conscience, their purity, their souls, with a folly far beyond his who, selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, said, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me?" Would to God men somewhat changed Esau's question, and put it thus: "When I am at the point to die, what profit shall this pleasure yield to me? It looks charming now; how will it look then? It is pleasant to anticipate; how will it bear reflection—another day, on another bed, in the hour of death, at the bar of judgment?"

The pity is that men will not have regard to "the recompense of the reward," and allow themselves to be influenced—for both man and God act from motives—by high and holy motives. Our Lord himself, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Nor does it detract from Moses' piety and patriotism that, instead of acting from blind and ordinary impulses, he had regard to the "recompense of the reward."

Nothing could be farther removed from selfishness than the ends he aimed at and the reward he looked for. His was not the spirit of such as are deterred from gross sins only by the fear of hell, who discover nothing in heaven to desire but the refuge it

offers, nor in Jesus to love but the crown he bestows. Devoutest of men, he aimed at the glory of God; purest of patriots, he forgot his own interests in those of his people. These—the divine glory and the good of Israel—were his aims, and their attainment his sufficient reward; his motives as unselfish as the man's who leaps into the boiling flood to save a drowning child, and whose reward is not the plaudits of the crowd that watch him from the banks, as, buffeting the torrent with one hand and holding up the dripping infant in the other, he regains the shore, but the satisfaction of having saved the perishing, and of seeing the mother, whose thanks he waits not to receive, clasping her living boy to her beating breast.

But a right estimate of Moses' patriotism cannot be formed unless we take into account the circumstances in which he was reared. These were not less unfavorable to this virtue than are the gloom and foul vapors of a charnel-house to the growth and fragrance of a flower. It is not from castles so much as cabins, from princes so much as from among the people, that reformers and patriots spring. Luther came out of a miner's hut; and while the German boy sang in the streets for his bread, John Knox earned his by teaching. Wallace and William Tell, Hampden and George Washington, embarked in the cause of freedom with little else but their lives to lose. The noblest sacrifices of piety and patriotism have been made by such as had not a drop of noble blood in their veins. Few histories are more illustrative of that fact than Scotland's. Many of her nobles signed the Solemn League and Covenant, but with a very few, though illustrious, exceptions, it was her middle classes and peasantry who suffered for it. It was their blood that dyed her scaffolds and their strong arms that kept the banner flying on her moors and mountains, and it was they who, hoping against hope, never sheathed their swords till the tyrant fled, and those liberties, civil and sacred, were secured which have made that country the boast of Britons and envy of the world.

It is not commonly—and this makes Moses' case the more remarkable—from among the enervating influences of wealth and ease and luxury that men come forth to do grand things. It is with them as with birds. Those birds soar the highest that have had the hardest upbringing. Warm and soft the pretty nest where, under the covering of her wings, amid green leaves and golden tassels and the perfume of flowers, the mother-bird of sweet voice, but short and feeble flight, rears her tender brood. Not thus are eagles reared, as I have seen on scaling a dizzy crag. There, their cradle an open shelf, their nest a few rough sticks spread on the naked rock, the bright-eyed eaglets sat exposed to the rains that seamed the hillsides and every blast that howled through the glen. Such the hard nursing of birds that were thereafter to soar in sunny skies or with strong wings cleave the clouds and ride upon the storm! Even so, I thought, God usually nurses those amid difficulties and hardships who are destined to rise to eminence and accomplish great deeds on earth. Hence says Solomon, "It is good for man to bear the yoke in his youth."

Hence, because he had had no such yoke to bear, the more honor to Moses, the more illustrious his patriotism. Bred in a palace, he espoused the cause of the people; nursed on the lap of luxury, he embraced adversity; reared in a school of despots, he became the brave champion of liberty; long associated with oppressors, he took the side of the oppressed; educated as her son, he forfeited the favor of a princess to maintain the rights of the poor; with a crown in prospect, he had the magnanimity to choose a cross; and for the sake of his God and Israel, abandoned ease, refinement, luxuries and the highest earthly honors to be a houseless wanderer, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," and "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

That decision was as pious as patriotic; and in Moses' piety,

let it be observed, we have that which was the true support and backbone of his patriotism. Nor in that did his case present, though an illustrious, a singular conjunction. Religious men have ever proved the truest patriots. The cause of freedom has owed more to them than to any other class. They have ever fought best and bravest in their country's battles who sought another one; and strong in faith, at peace with God and sustained by hopes of immortality, were careless whether, as one of our martyrs expressed it, they rotted in the earth or in the air, died amid holy prayers or the shouts of battle and the roar of cannon. The greatest patriots of our own country were not its worldlings, its profligates, its skeptics, but devout and holy men —men who slept with their Bibles as well as pistols by their pillow; who carried the sacred volume to battle in their bosoms as well as in their hearts; and whose tombstones, venerated by a pious peasantry, still stand on our moors and mountains, marked by the appropriate symbols of an open Bible and a naked sword. But never was the connection between true piety and true patriotism so eminently illustrated as in the case of Moses. He abandoned all worldly interests for those of religion and of his race. He preferred the reproach of Christ to the riches of Egypt. Though thereby claiming kindred with a race of slaves, he counted it a higher honor to be a child of Abraham than to be reckoned the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He gallantly embarked in the cause of his brethren, resolved to sink or swim with them. Type of our divine Redeemer, he bore much for them, and bore also much from them. Offering the highest pattern of patriotism sustained by piety, with what meekness he met their insolence!—with what patience their provocations!—with what forgiveness their unparalleled ingratitude and oft-repeated attempts upon his life!—and when God, provoked to cast them off, offered to make of him a great nation, with what noble generosity did he intercede on their behalf, refusing to build his own house on the ruins of theirs!

From him we may learn how to be patriots, and how patriotism, like all other virtues, has its true root in piety. He did not miss the recompense of reward. He enjoys its heaven. He had it on earth—accomplishing the grand object of his life when, with victory and thanksgiving on his lips, his last gaze, ere he ascended to the heavenly Canaan, was fixed in dying raptures on the promised land; and though no nation with the tears of bitter grief and the pomp of public funeral followed their great leader to his grave, he was buried with higher honors—as some poet thus finely sings:

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man dug the sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

"That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth,
But no man heard the tramping
Or saw the train go forth.
For without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

"Perchance the bald old eagle,
On gray Bethpeor's height,
Out of his rocky eyrie
Looked on the wondrous sight:
Perchance the lion stalking
Still shuns that hallowed spot,
For beast and bird have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not.

"But when the warrior dieth,
His comrades in the war,
With arms reversed and muffled drum,
Follow the funeral car:

They show the banners taken,
They tell his battles won,
And after him lead his masterless steed,
While peals the minute-gun.

"Amid the noblest of the land
Men lay the sage to rest,
And give the bard an honored place,
With costly marbles drest,
In the great minster transept
Where lights like glories fall,
And the choir sings, and the organ rings
Along th' emblazoned wall.

"This was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled sword;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word;
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

"And had he not high honors?—
The hillside for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock pines with tossing plumes
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that mountain land
To lay him in the grave?

"In that deep grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—most wondrous thought!—
Before the judgment-day;
And stand with glory wrapped around
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
With th' incarnate Son of God.

"Oh, lonely tomb in Moab's land!
Oh, dark Bethpeor's hill!
Speak to these anxious hearts of ours
And teach them to be still.
God hath his mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him he loved so well."

# X.

## JOSHUA.[1]

WHETHER descending from the snowy Alps, where flowers bloom on its margin, to melt away before the summer heat and pour from its icy cavern a turbid, roaring torrent, or descending through the drear desolation of Arctic regions to topple over the sea-cliff, and form the icebergs, the dread of mariners, that come floating like glittering castles and cathedrals into southern seas, the glacier is a river of ice—not of fluid, but of solid, water. Tossed into waves of many a fantastic form, and cracked with fissures that gape to swallow up the unwary traveler and bury him in their profound blue depths, this remarkable object, as may be seen in the Mer de Glace, possesses a wonderfully firm texture. Its ice rings to a blow, yet it climbs up slopes, turns the edge of opposing rocks, forces its way through narrow gorges, and, accommodating itself to the curves of the valley, advances with a slow but regular rate of progress. How this vast, continuous mass of ice, many miles in length and hundreds of feet in thickness, is displaced and thrust forward and downward into the plains, was long, but is no longer, a mystery. It happens thus: Each succeeding winter covers the mountain-tops with fresh accumulations of snow; these, with their enormous weight pressing from above and behind on the partially plastic glacier which the frost forms out of their snow, force it from its birthplace to seek room elsewhere. It de-

[1] Guthrie.

scends, it melts, and, changed into flowing streams, carries beauty to smiling valleys and fertility to far distant plains.

By an analogous process, men, who naturally cling to their birthplace, and often, like trees that spread their roots on a naked rock, cling to it the closer the poorer it is, are constrained to obey the original command of God, and even against their will, "replenish the earth." Those Alpine valleys which have furnished us with a figure furnish a remarkable example of that fact. Walled in by stupendous mountains, whose heads are crowned with eternal snows and whose precipitous sides afford little else than footing for pines and food for wild goats, it is a very limited number of families they are able to support. Supplying to their stated inhabitants but the bare necessaries of life, they afford no room for increase of population. In consequence of this, as the birth exceeds the death rate, and numbers thereby accumulate, their pressure, like that of the snows on the glacier, forces the population outward, compelling them, though with bleeding hearts and tender memories of their dear mountain-home, to seek relief in emigration—room and bread elsewhere. Hence, whether born in Swiss or Italian valleys, the natives of the Alps are met with over the whole Continent.

The pressure of population on the ordinary means of subsistence is as much felt in a small country hemmed in by the sea as in one hemmed in by mountains. Unlike trees, whose bark expands with their growth, the people cooped up in such a country are like a man sheathed in unelastic, iron armor. Destitute of energy, they remain at home, almost always on the borders, and frequently suffering the horrors, of famine. Educated and enterprising, they seek an outlet. They go abroad; and encountering alike the dangers of the sea and the hardships of the emigrant, they may be found in huts scattered on foreign and savage shores laying the foundations of future commonwealths.

"The latter part seems to be specially assigned of God," says Dr. Guthrie, of Scotland, "to our country and our countrymen.

Carrying with us the love of liberty, literature and science, the useful and also ornamental arts, and above all that word of God which bringeth salvation, one of the brightest prospects in the future of our world is, that Britons, forced by the increase of population and the narrow limits of their island-home to seek new settlements on other shores, shall be more than any other the chosen race to fulfill the command of Eden, and multiplying, 'replenish the earth.' With the energy of the old Scandinavians in our blood, with a resolution that delights to encounter difficulties, with a courage that is inflamed, not quenched, by dangers, with our ships ploughing every sea and our commerce connecting us with every shore, to us more than to any other Christian nation God seems to commit the interests of humanity and the kingdom of his Son, saying, as to Israel of old, 'Go ye in and possess the land;' saying, as to the first disciples, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' A noble destiny this!—the chief purpose perhaps for which, though occupying a small, remote and stormy isle, we have grown into a mighty people and fill a place in the world vastly greater than that which our island fills on its map. Great colonists as we are, and greater as, with the growth of our wealth and therefore of our population, we are likely to be, it may prove instructive and also interesting to look at Joshua in the character of a colonist—the leader of the largest band that ever left their old in search of a new home. The emigration which he, succeeding Moses, conducted to a happy issue was divinely directed as well as divinely appointed, and from it our country may gather lessons of the greatest importance, if not indeed essential to the right fulfillment of its splendid and holy destiny.

"I remark, then, that the colonization of Canaan under Joshua was conducted in an orderly manner, on a large scale, and in a way eminently favorable to the happiness of the emigrants and the interests of virtue and religion.

"We certainly cannot say the same of ours. Our system

of emigration rends asunder the dearest ties of nature, removing from the side of aged parents those who should tend and support them. It carries away the very flower of our youth, the enterprising, the stout-hearted and the strong-handed, and so leaves the old country burdened with an undue proportion of such as are feeble and infirm. Our manner of emigration is attended with still worse, because most immoral, effects. The largest proportion of such as seek a home in other lands being young men, there are too many women at home and too many men abroad. The equality of the sexes is disturbed. God's virtuous order is thrown into confusion, and the consequences, both to the old country and its colonies, are immoral, eminently pernicious.

"It was in another fashion that God managed the emigration of the Hebrews under Moses and Joshua. It presents us with a model we would do well to copy. The children of Israel entered Canaan to be settled within allotted borders—by families and by tribes. In their case emigration was thus less a change of persons than a change—and a happy change—of place. No broad seas rolled between the severed members of the same family; there were no bitter partings of parents and the children they feared never more to see; nor did the emigrants, with sad faces and swimming eyes, stand crowded on the ship's stern to watch the blue mountains of their dear native land as they sank beneath the wave. Now, were our emigrations conducted somewhat after this divine model, the trees, the birds, the flowers, the skies, might differ from those of the old country, but with the same loved faces before them, the same loved voices in their ear, the same loved forms moving about the house, the same neighbors to associate and intermarry with, to rally around them in danger, to sit at their festive board, and at length carry their coffin to the grave, our emigrants would feel their new quarters to be *home*, and remember almost without a pang, since they had brought away with them those who most endeared it, the glen or valley, the

city or village, of their birth. See many of our colonists separated by broad seas from all they love; strangers to one another; dwelling far apart; scattered on the lonely prairie or buried in the depths of gloomy forests; doomed to rough work and learning rougher manners; sighing for their old homes, the amenities of civilized and the sweet pleasures of domestic life! How enviable compared to theirs the circumstances of the Hebrews on the other side of Jordan, amid the swelling hills and green valleys of their adopted land! Every homestead presents a picture of virtuous domestic life. The aged parents, regarded with reverence and supported with cheerfulness, sit shadowed by vine and fig tree, while the father, leaving his plough in the furrow or leading his flock homeward at the close of day, is met by a merry band of children to conduct him to a home where a bright wife stands at the door with smiles of welcome on her face, one infant in her arms and another at her knee.

"A still more important lesson than that taught by the orderly, just, humane and happy arrangements of this Hebrew colony is taught us by the care Joshua took of its religious interests. These, the greatest, yet considered apparently the least, of all interests, are sadly neglected in many of our foreign stations; and I have often wondered to see with what little reluctance Christian parents could send their children away to lands where more lost their religion than made their fortune. Alas for many of our emigrants!—not scapegraces, but youths of fair and lovely promise—with none to care for their souls! The world engrosses all their care. No holy Sabbath renews each week impressions that were fading away. Seldom visited by any minister of the gospel, far remote from the sound of the church-going bell, they grow indifferent to the claims of religion, apathy steals over them like a creeping palsy; and disgracing the very name of Christian, many addict themselves to vices which make even the heathen blush. Condemn the Canaanites for offering their children up to Moloch!—equally cruel and costly, and far more

guilty, are the sacrifices some parents make of theirs to Mammon. Talk of the Old Testament being out of date!—it were well for our countrymen, and the world over so many of whose shores our colonies are planted, if we copied the lessons of that divine old Book. Whatever we do with our religion, the Hebrews did not leave the ark of God behind them. Regarding it as at once their glory and defence, they followed it into the bed of Jordan, and passing the flood on foot, bore it with them into the adopted land. Wherever they pitched their tents they set up the altar and tabernacle of their God. Priests and teachers formed part of their train; and making ample provision for the regular ministration of word and ordinance, they laid in holy and pious institutions the foundations of their future commonwealth. Here is an example to us. Our surplus population must of necessity emigrate. We are furnished in God's good providence with remarkable facilities for carrying the blessings of civilization and a pure gospel to the ends of the earth. I know no grander scheme for our country and its Christian patriots than a colonization formed to the utmost extent, in all its orderly arrangements and family relationships and religious provisions, on the model of that which Israel followed in the land of Canaan. We have attempted it in the New Zealand settlements of Canterbury and Otago on a small and imperfect scale. But it were as much to our own interest as to the good of mankind that we tried it on a scale corresponding to our means and the world's clamant necessities. Such colonies would relieve the old country and bless the new, and these, unlike the melancholy ruins of ancient kingdoms, depopulated regions and the graves of extinct and exterminated tribes, were worthy footmarks for us to leave on the sands of time and the soil of heathen shores.

"Such are some of the points in which Joshua is to be admired and imitated as a model colonist. Alas! while neglecting his example in things worthy of imitation, we have followed it but too closely in the one thing where it affords us no precedent to

follow. I refer to the fire and sword he carried into the land of Canaan and his extermination of its original inhabitants. We have too faithfully followed him in this, with no warrant, human or divine, to do so. Let me explain the matter.

"The day of Jericho's doom has come. To the amazement first, and afterward, no doubt, to the amusement, of its inhabitants, the host of Israel, followed by the ark of God and priests with sounding horns, have walked on six successive days the round of its walls. Its inhabitants crowding the ramparts have probably made merry with the Hebrews, asking, as they passed, if they expected to throw down stone walls with rams' horns instead of battering-rams, and whether they had not walking enough in the wilderness these past forty years that they were taking this daily and very harmless turn round their city. With such gibes and mockery the six days passed on; but now the seventh, the Sabbath of the Lord, had come, and with it an end of their mirth and of Jericho itself. Smitten, when the people shouted and the trumpets blew, as by the blast of a mine or the shock of an earthquake, its walls were to fall flat to the ground and lay it open to the assault. And in view of that event, these were Joshua's instructions: 'The city shall be accursed, it and all therein, to the Lord; only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house.' And committing no mistake as to the full and bloody import of this order, the people, it is said, 'utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old.' Nor was the slaughter at the sack of Ai, conducted also under Joshua's orders, less indiscriminating and wholesale. There was not, we are told, a man or woman but was smitten with the edge of the sword, the king only excepted; and him—the last survivor of these stout heathens and of a miserable crowd of women and children—whom the people had taken alive and brought captive to Joshua, Joshua carried to the smoking ruins of his home and hanged on a tree. These are specimens of the policy which the Hebrews pursued in Canaan, killing all, with-

out distinction of rank or sex or age. They went to the slaughter of the Canaanites as we should to the destruction of our sins—their eye did not pity and their hand did not spare.

"We naturally recoil from such scenes; and taking advantage of that horror of bloodshed and of the sufferings of innocents which God has implanted in every breast, Tom Paine and other ribald skeptics have made this terrible extermination a ground for attacking the character of Joshua and denying the divine authority of the Bible itself. The faith of some has staggered at this terrible wholesale slaughter; it has disturbed the minds of others; and it may be well to take this opportunity of showing that, severe as the judgment was, it affords no ground whatever either for traducing the character of Joshua or doubting the divinity of Scripture.

"There have been monsters who delighted in cruelty and found music in the groans of sufferers, ruthless conquerors who put all without distinction to the sword, as deaf to the cries of mothers and the wails of infants as the steel they buried in their bowels. Joshua did exterminate the Canaanites, but he is not to be ranked with these. The kindly terms which he uses to Achan, as, bending with pity over the guilty man, he calls him 'my son'—the high honor he displayed in keeping faith with the Gibeonites, who had so cleverly entrapped him—the dauntless courage which he carried into battle, with which he faced the Israelites when, maddened on one occasion to fury, they sought his life, and with which also, when alone by the walls of Jericho, on seeing the Lord of hosts, in form of a man, standing across his path with a sword drawn in his hand, he went up to him with the brave challenge, 'Art thou for us or for our adversaries?'—the piety which raises man above all low and brutal passions, and ever softens the heart it sanctifies,—these noble features in Joshua's character are incompatible with a temper that could find pleasure in the infliction of suffering or delight in scenes of blood. It is not the pious, but the impious—not honorable men, but knaves

—not the brave, but cowards—that are cruel. The judge is not cruel who condemns a criminal; and placed in similar circumstances, no doubt Joshua, brave, gentle and generous, was often agitated by the emotions of him who, seated on yonder bench of justice, with swimming eyes, and voice his rising feelings choke, pronounces on some pale, trembling wretch the dreadful doom of death.

"In his bloodiest work Joshua was acting under commission. His orders were clear, however terrible they read. These are his instructions, as given by God to Moses: 'When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son'—a terrible sentence clinched with this weighty reason, 'for they will turn away thy sons from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.' There, God undertakes the whole responsibility. And be it observed that the children of Israel were blamed not because they did, but because they did not, exterminate the Canaanites—slaying them with the sword or driving them out of the land. The duty was painful and stern, but they lived to find, as God had warned them would happen to them, and as happens to us when we spare the sins of which these heathen were the type, that mercy to the Canaanites was cruelty to themselves.

"But admitting that the responsibility is shifted from Joshua to God, how, it may be asked, are the sufferings of the Canaanites, their expulsion and bloody extermination from the land, to be

reconciled with the character of God as just and good and righteous? This is like many other of his acts. On attempting to scrutinize them, mystery meets us on the threshold. No wonder! —when we feel constrained to exclaim even over a flake of snow, the spore of a fern, the leaf of a tree, the change of a base grub into a winged and painted butterfly, 'Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.' Dark as the judgment on Canaan seems, a little consideration will show that it is no greater, nor so great, a mystery as many others in the providence of God.

"The land of Canaan was his—'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.' And I ask, in turn, is the sovereign Proprietor of all to be denied the right that ordinary proprietors claim—the right to remove one set of tenants and replace them by another? Besides, the inhabitants of Canaan were not only, so to speak, 'tenants at will,' but tenants of the worst description. They practiced the grossest immoralities; even their religious rites were obscene. Cruel, sensual, devilish, they were sinners beyond other men—a curse to the world which they corrupted with their vices and burdened with a load of guilt. And, therefore, unless we refuse to God the right we grant to inferior proprietors—that of doing what they will with their own—and the right also we grant to inferior governors—that of inflicting punishment on crime—God possessed an absolute and perfect authority not only to remove, but to exterminate, these idolaters out of the land, saying, 'Thou shalt smite and utterly destroy them.' Let it be remarked also that the Canaanites not only deserved, but chose, their fate. The fame of what God had done for the tribes of Israel had preceded their arrival in the land of Canaan. Thus, its guilty tenants were early warned; got 'notice to quit;' might be considered as summoned out. They refused to go. They chose the chances of resistance rather than quiet

removal; and so—for be it observed that the Israelites in the first instance were only ordered to cast them out—they brought destruction on themselves, with their own hands pulling down the house that buried them and their children in its ruins.

"But the children?—the unoffending infants? There is a mystery, I admit—an awful mystery—in their destruction, but no new or greater mystery here than meets us everywhere else. The mystery of offspring who suffer through their parents' sins is repeated daily in our own streets. Look at that poor child shivering in the winter cold, rags on its back and cruel hunger in its hollow cheek, reared in deepest ignorance and driven into crime, doomed to a life of infamy and of misery: it suffers, the hapless victim of a father's drunkenness. Look at this wasted, withered, sallow infant that is pining away to death and the mercy of the grave, with its little head wearily laid on the foul shoulders of one who has lost, with the heart, almost the features, of her sex: it suffers through a mother's sins. Sanitary reformers tell us, and tell us truly, that thousands of children die year by year in consequence of the foul habits and foul habitations of improvident and careless parents; and history tells us that not thousands, but millions, who did not know their right hand from their left, have fallen victims to wars and conflagrations, to earthquakes and famines, to plagues and pestilences. It does not alter the case one whit to say that children who die of disease, for instance, die by the laws of Nature, while those in Canaan were put to death by the command of God. This is a distinction without a difference; for what are the laws of Nature but the ordinances and will of God? If it is consistent with his righteous government to deprive an infant of life by the hand of disease, it is equally so to do it by the edge of the sword. And thus, while the death of a thousand children is not more mysterious than that of one, there is no more mystery in all the slaughtered babes of Canaan than lies shrouded and shut up in the little coffin any sad father lays in an untimely grave. Nor is the cloud which

here surrounds God's throne, dark as it seems, without a silver lining. There is mercy in the death of all infants, the Canaanites not excepted. I feel here as I have often felt when gazing on the form of a dead child in some foul haunt of wretchedness and vice. To die is to go to heaven. To have lived had been to inherit the misery and repeat the crimes of parents. The sword of the Hebrew opens to the babes of Canaan a happy escape from misery and sin—a sharp but short passage to a better and purer world.

"Thus, and otherwise, we can justify the sternest deeds of which Joshua has been accused. He held a commission from God to enter Canaan and cast out its guilty inhabitants, and, like a woodman who enters the forest axe in hand, to cut them down if they clung like trees to its soil. His conduct admits of the fullest vindication; and though it did not, we should be the last to accuse him. Ours are not the hands to cast a stone at Joshua. A more painful and shameful history than the history of some at least of our colonies was never written. Talk of the extermination of the Canaanites! Where are the Indian tribes our settlers found roaming, in plumed and painted freedom, the forests of the New World? Excepting a few scattered, degraded savages, all have disappeared from the face of the earth. We found Tasmania with a native population, and lately the only survivors were a single woman and some dozen men. Unless where our emigrants are settled on its shores, or lonely shepherds tend their flocks, or the gold-digger toils for the treasures in its bowels, the Australian continent is becoming a solitude, its aborigines disappearing before us with the strange animals that inhabit their forests and form their scanty food. Equally with the timid Bushmen and crouching Hottentot, the brave savages of New Zealand are vanishing before our vices, diseases and firearms. Not more fatal to the Canaanites the irruption of the Hebrews than our arrival in almost every colony to its native population. We have seized their lands, and in a way less honorable, and even merciful, than the swords of Israel, have given them in re-

turn nothing but a grave. They have perished before our vices and diseases. Our presence has been their extermination; nor is it possible for a man with a heart to read many pages of our colonial history without feelings of deepest pity and burning indignation. They remind us of the sad but true words of Fowell Buxton. The darkest day, said that Christian philanthropist, for many a heathen tribe, was that which first saw the white man step upon their shores. Instead of a blessing, we have carried a blight with us. Professed followers of Him who came not to destroy but to save the world, we have entered the territories of the heathen with fire and sword, and adding murder to robbery, have spoiled the unoffending natives of their lives as well as of their lands.

"Had we any commission to exterminate? Divine as Joshua's, our commission was as opposite to his as opposing poles to each other. These are its blessed terms: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Can our country and its churches read that without a blush of shame and a sense of guilt? Let us repent the errors of the past. Not so much to aggrandize our island, as to Christianize the world by our colonies, is the noble enterprise to which Providence calls us. Our sailors touch at every port, the keels of our ships plough every sea, our manufactures are borne to every shore, our settlements are scattered far and wide over the whole face of the globe, and year by year this busy hive throws off its swarms to take wing in search of new settlements and wider homes. With its literature and language, with its hereditary love of adventure and indomitable vigor, with its devotion to liberty civil and sacred, with the truth preached from its pulpits and Bibles issued by millions from its printing-presses, our country seems called of Heaven to marshal the forces of the cross on the borders of heathendom, and 'go in to possess the land.'"

"Go ye in to possess the land"—these, if I may say so, were

the marching orders under which Joshua and Israel entered Canaan; and however unable they appeared, in point of numbers and ordinary resources, to cope with those who held the soil, and were prepared to fight like men that had their homes and hearths, their wives and children, to defend, yet then, as still, the measure of man's ability is God's command. While he denied them straw, Pharaoh required the Israelites to make bricks; and other masters may impose on their servants orders equally unreasonable. But whatever God requires of us, God will give ability to do. Is it to repent and be converted? is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved? is it to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts? is it to abstain from evil and do good? is it to cast sin and depravity out of our hearts, like Canaanites out of the land?—the fact that God has commanded us to do a thing proves that we can do it. So there is no Christian but may adopt the bold words of Paul, and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Since it is so, what a noble career and rapid conquest were before the children of Israel! Sweeping over Canaan like a resistless flood, they might have carried all before them. What difficulties could prove too great for those who had God to aid them? What need had they of bridge or boats, before whose feet the waters of Jordan fled?—of engines of war, whose shout, borne on the air, smote the ramparts of Jericho to the ground with an earthquake's reeling shock?—of allies, who had Heaven on their side, to hurl down death from the skies on their panic-stricken enemies? How could they lose the fruits of victory, over the retreat of whose foes night refused to throw her mantle, while the sun held the sky, nor sunk in darkness till their bloody work was done? What were natural difficulties or disparity of numbers to those who entered Canaan with the promise, "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commands, and do them, your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing-time, and ye shall eat your bread unto the

full, and dwell in your land safely; and ye shall chase your enemies; and they shall fall before you by the sword; and five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight"?

With these promises Israel crossed the flood on foot; yet after many years, and ample time allowed to exterminate all the Canaanites, we find God saying to Joshua, "Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." How true, and, alas! how sad, that these reproachful words admit of a wider than their original application—one involving on the part of Christ's Church deeper sin and greater shame! It is a long time ago—more than eighteen hundred years—since our Lord brought his Church into the world, and conducting her to the borders of heathenism, said, "Go ye in to possess the land; go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; go, and I will be with you; go, and I will never leave nor forsake you." His Church measures its existence not by years, but centuries. It has seen hundreds of generations swept into the tomb. Save the changeless sea and perpetual hills, it has seen all things changed beneath the sun, the religions of Egypt and Greece and Rome sink into the tide of time, and every kingdom that flourished at its birth pass away from the face of the world. Venerable for its age not less than for its truth, the Church of Christ has had time enough to plant the cross on every shore and push its bloodless conquests into every land; yet how may Jesus, pointing to a world by much the larger portion of which remains under the dominion of darkness and of the devil, address her, saying, "Thou art old and stricken in years, and yet there is much land to be possessed"?

So gigantic is the missionary work which lies before the Church that the old words are still appropriate, "The field is the world." With exceptions hardly deserving notice, the whole continent of Asia, the whole continent of Africa, and, speaking of its original inhabitants, the whole continent of the New World—in other

words, much the largest portion of the globe—is "land yet to be possessed." Eighteen centuries ago Christ charged his people to carry the tidings of salvation to the ends of the earth, but thousands of millions have died, and hundreds of millions are living, who never heard his name. Was ever master so ill served, or hard battle and noble victory, if I may say so, so defrauded of their fruits?

Again, it is true even of our own native country that "there is much land yet to be possessed." The eyes of a fool, says Solomon, are in the ends of the earth; and however much we commend the zeal which has sent missionaries to the plains of India, the sands of Africa and Greenland's icy shores, perhaps we lie somewhat open to that remark. In seeking to convert the heathen abroad, have we not too much overlooked the claims of those at home, and, like unwise generals, pushed on our conquests while leaving a formidable enemy in the rear? In those vast, almost unbroken, masses, ignorance and intemperance, whose rags and vices, whose neglect of religious ordinances and moral degradation, disgrace our country and Christian name, how much land is there yet to possess? If we reckon how fast the non-church-going population of our large towns, and of many mining and manufacturing districts also, is increasing; how many are sinking year by year into the godless mass that has abandoned the house of God and cast off all profession of religion; and how that rising flood of irreligion threatens at no distant period to engulf throne and altar and all to which the country owes its goodness and its greatness,—what need is there to push on the work of home as well as of foreign missions, and "enter in to possess the land"!

In addressing ourselves to this task, we might take a lesson from the manner in which the twelve tribes took possession of the land of Canaan. God divided it for them into twelve different parts. Giving to each a part, he said, as it were, "This is your portion, fight for it; while you help your brother, and your

brother helps you, be this your sphere for work and warfare." Thus all jealousy, envy and discord were prevented, the only rivalry between one tribe and another being who should be foremost in the work—the first to cast the heathen out of their borders and possess the land. Had no such plan been adopted, what had happened?—the tribes had fallen into quarrels, and those who fought with the Canaanites had probably fought with each other. And, I have thought, it were well did the Churches of Jesus Christ apportion out the heathen world, and well also if our different denominations, laying aside all haughty exclusiveness and mutual jealousies, were to divide the waste field at home. Then "Judah would no longer vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah," and the Church, acting in harmony, marching in concert throughout all its sections, would go forth to the conquest of the world, to use the grand words of the old prophet, "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

Then, animated with one spirit and aiming at one object, we might expect such success as blest her earliest days. What noble progress did she make when the dews of youth were on her! For one heathen converted now, hundreds were converted then. By her arms Rome subdued kingdoms, but the Church by the preaching of the gospel subdued Rome herself. Nor oppression, nor exile, nor bloody scaffolds, nor fiery stakes, nor persecution in its most appalling forms, could arrest her triumphant career. She entered the temples of idolatry, smiting down their gods as with an iron mace; she forced her way through the guards of imperial palaces; she faced all danger; she overcame all opposition; and almost before the last of the apostles was called to his rest, she made the name of Christ greater than Cæsar's, proclaiming the faith and planting the cross in every region of the then known world. Wherever Roman commerce sailed, she followed in its wake; wherever the Roman eagles flew, she was there, like a dove, bearing the olive branch of peace. A century or two more of such progress, such holy energy, such self-denying zeal, and

the Spirit of God continuing to bless the preaching of the word, the whole land had been possessed—the earth had been the Lord's, and all the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdom of our Christ. Though it tarries now, that vision shall come; and to Him whose hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear, be the prayer offered till the answer come, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, and in the days of old."

# XI.

## CALEB.

IT is not the quantity, but the temper, of the metal which makes a good sword, nor is it mere bulk, but a large measure of nervous and muscular force, which makes a strong man; and in accordance with the saying of Napoleon I., that "moral is to physical power as three to one," the wars of all ages have proved that success in battle does not turn so much on the multitude as on the *morale*, on the numbers as on the character, of the troops.

The triumph of the Prussians, for example, in their brief but bloody contest with Austria, and in their more recent victory over France, was due less to the superiority of their arms than of their education, intelligence and religion; under Providence, these, not numbers or the needle-gun, turned the fortunes of the campaign. To the same or similar moral causes Oliver Cromwell owed his remarkable success. Fanatics or not, right or wrong in their religious and political views, his troops were thoughtful men, of strict and even severe manners, within whose camps there was little swearing, but much psalm-singing—soldiers who, if they did not, because they could not in conscience, honor the king, feared God. It was from their knees in silent prayer, or from public assemblies held for worship, those men went to battle, who almost never fought but they conquered, bearing down in the shock of arms the very flower and pride of England's chivalry. By heroic deeds which history records, and John Mil-

ton sang, and all denominations of Protestant Christians agree in admiring and approving, the valleys of Piedmont teach the same lesson. Strong were their mountain fastnesses; the dizzy crag they shared with the eagle; the narrow gorge, where, with a roaring torrent on this side and a dark frowning precipice on that, one brave man, spear in hand, or with boys and women at his back to load the rifles, could hold the pass against a thousand. Yet the salvation of the Waldenses did not lie in "the munition of rocks." To the *morale* which endured three centuries of the cruelest persecution, turned every rock into a monument, faced death on every meadow and gave to every village its roll of martyrs, was chiefly due the illustrious spectacle of a handful of men defending their faith and country against the arms of Savoy and the persecutions of Rome. It was this which braced them for the struggle, and repeatedly rolled back on the plains of Italy the bleeding fragments of the mighty armies that invaded their mountain homes.

So long as we cannot dispense with locks and keys to protect our goods from thieves, nor with police to preserve our persons from assault and our homes from housebreakers, it is vain to hope that we can dispense with the means of protecting our country from those who, though dignified with the names of conquerors, are nothing else than thieves and murderers. Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, differed from the felons we send to prison or consign to the gallows only in that they plundered not houses, but kingdoms, and on bloody battle-fields, strewed with the bodies of mangled thousands, committed not solitary but wholesale slaughter.

But while we may justify a standing army, I would like to ask what Christian man can justify those arrangements which, in so many respects, convert it into a standing immorality. This is a subject within our sphere, as Christians and patriots, to notice. We have here an enormous evil, which every lover of God and of the souls of men and of his country should seek to amend. I

know few things that call so loudly for reform as the unfavorable circumstances in which we place our soldiers, so far as regards especially their highest, their moral and religious, interests.

## CALEB'S FIDELITY.

Fidelity is one of the first properties of a soldier; and it were well that every good cause, and especially that of Christ, could boast of such fidelity as gallant men have often shown in the ranks of war. Mere boys have bravely carried the colors of their regiment into battle, and to save them from falling into the hands of the enemy they have been known, when they themselves fell, to wrap them around their bodies and die within their encrimsoned folds. An incident more heroic still occurred on one of those fields where Austria lately suffered disastrous defeat. When the bloody fight was over and the victors were removing the wounded, they came on a young Austrian stretched on the ground, whose life was pouring out in the red streams of a ghastly wound. To their astonishment, he declined their kind services. Recommending others to be removed, he implored them, though he might still have been saved, to let him alone. On returning some time afterward they found him dead—all his battles o'er. But the mystery was explained. They raised the body to give it burial, and there, below him, lay the colors of his regiment. He had sworn not to part with them; and though he clung to life and tenderly thought of a mother and sisters in their distant home, he would not purchase recovery at the price of his oath and the expense of a soldier's honor—"he was faithful unto death."

There was nothing in Pompeii, that most weird and wonderful of all cities—"city of the dead," as Walter Scott kept repeating to himself when they bore the shattered man through its silent streets—that invested it with a deeper interest to me than the spot where a soldier of old Rome displayed a most heroic fidelity. That fatal day on which Vesuvius, at whose feet the city stood,

burst out into an eruption that shook the earth, poured torrents of lava from its riven sides, and discharged, amid the noise of a hundred thunders, such clouds of ashes as filled the air, produced a darkness deeper than midnight, and struck such terror into all hearts that men thought not only that the end of the world had come and all must die, but that the gods themselves were expiring—on that night a sentinel kept watch by the gate which looked to the burning mountain. Amid unimaginable confusion and shrieks of terror mingling with the roar of the volcano, and cries of mothers who had lost their children in the darkness, the inhabitants fled the fatal town, while the falling ashes, loading the darkened air and penetrating every place, rose in the streets till they covered the house-roofs, nor left a vestige of the city but a vast silent mound, beneath which it lay unknown, dead and buried, for nearly seventeen hundred years. Amid this fearful disorder the sentinel at the gate had been forgotten; and as Rome required her sentinels, happen what might, to hold their posts till relieved by the guard or set at liberty by their officers, he had to choose between death and dishonor. Pattern of fidelity, he stood by his post. Slowly but surely the ashes rise on his manly form; now they reach his breast, and now covering his lips, they choke his breathing. He also was "faithful unto death." After seventeen centuries they found his skeleton standing erect in a marble niche, clad in its rusty armor—the helmet on his empty skull and his bony fingers still closed upon his spear. And next almost to the interest I felt in placing myself on the spot where Paul, true to his colors when all men deserted him, pleaded before the Roman tyrant, was the interest I felt in the niche by the city gate where they found the skeleton of one who, in his fidelity to the cause of Cæsar, sets us an example of faithfulness to the cause of Christ—an example it were for the honor of their Master that all his servants followed.

This property of a good soldier was eminently illustrated by Caleb. One of the twelve heads of the tribes of Israel whom

Moses selected to spy out the promised land, he entered Canaan along with Joshua and the other ten, traveling from its southernmost to its northern border. In this expedition his fidelity and courage do not appear to have been put to the test. Nor is it difficult to explain how this happened and they were able to execute their commission without being suspected of the character or suffering the fate of spies—safe from the dangers to which the two men were exposed who, forty years afterward, were sent into Jericho.

Caleb and his associates entered the land of Canaan little more than twelve months after Israel had left that of Egypt. At this time no report of what had happened there seemed to have reached the Canaanites. But when the host, after wandering in the wilderness for forty years, returned to the borders of the promised land, they found its inhabitants—as well they might be—all on the alert, the whole country alarmed by reports, which fame would not lessen but rather exaggerate, of how the host that approached their borders had been miraculously sustained in the wilderness, and how, aided by Jehovah, they had trodden in the dust the greatest kings and nations that had attempted to oppose their progress. It was not till Caleb returned to the camp of Israel that, as I proceed now to show, he met with anything to put his fidelity to the test and bring it out, an illustrious example to future ages.

The news that the spies are returning flies like wildfire through the tents and calls forth all the people. There they come, browned with the sun and dust of travel. They bring proofs of the fertility of the soil in the fruits which they hold in their hands, and in that one bunch of grapes, a cluster so weighty that it requires two men to carry. The camp is full of joy, and every ear intent, as, addressing Moses in the hearing of the people, the spies say, "We came into the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." Alas! their joy is short-lived. How are their hearts struck with dread,

and the hopes they have cherished changed into blank despair, as the spies go on to say, "Nevertheless the people be strong, and the cities are walled, and very great;" adding, with voices that trembled at the recollection of their gigantic forms, "and we saw the children of Anak there"! The children of Anak! At this news the whole congregation grows pale with terror. Fear sits on every face, and expresses itself in a low murmuring wail that, unless it meets a timely check, will ere long break out into open mutiny. At this crisis Caleb interposes—not to deny the statement of his associates, but to repudiate the cowardly conclusion they suggested and the people accepted. Faithful to the cause of God, he rushes to the front to deliver himself of words full of faith and courage. They sound like a battle trumpet. No doubt the Canaanites are strong; their walls are high, their ranks led on by giant warriors, the formidable sons of Anak. Nevertheless, as one who knew that He who was with them was greater than all who could be against them, Caleb cries out, "Let us go up at once and possess it; we are well able to overcome it."

So he spake. But ere Joshua—if we may judge from the narrative—has time to second him and echo this heroic address, the other spies interpose. Now painting matters darker than at first, they complete the panic, saying, "All the people that we saw in it are men of great stature; and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in theirs." At these words, as if a thunderbolt or shell had dropped among them, the multitude suddenly disperse. Through the livelong night weeping fills the camp; nor does joy come in the morning. They have abandoned themselves to despair. Regretting that they had ever left the land of Egypt, they resolve to retrace their steps. They cast blame on God, and give way to such grief and rage and wild, blind fury that Moses and Aaron are confounded. Knowing neither what to do nor how to turn the people from their mad purpose, they fall on their faces and lie on the ground, as if they said, If you will go back

to Egypt, it is over our bodies you shall go. At this moment, though it was like laying hands on the mane of a raging lion, Caleb, supported by Joshua, once more steps forward, and regardless of a life the people had armed themselves with stones to destroy, he reproaches their cowardice, saying, "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread to us, their defence is departed from them. The Lord is with us; fear them not." Another moment, and, his life battered out of him by a shower of stones, Caleb had fallen a sacrifice to his own fidelity and the people's fury. But suddenly, in the form of some brilliant, dazzling, intolerable light—the well-known symbol of the divine Presence—"the glory of the Lord appears in the tabernacle before all the children of Israel." They, not Caleb and Joshua, nor Moses and Aaron, are in peril now. God is ready to destroy them, and they had been swept from the face of the earth but for Moses' earnest and timely intercession. They are doomed for their sin to wander forty years in the wilderness, until the carcasses of all who were over twenty years of age on leaving Egypt have fallen there. God forgives them. Merciful and gracious, he forgets their offence, but not Caleb's fidelity. "Surely," he says, "they shall not see the land, but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." Even so shall it be with all who, faithful to the sacred interests of their heavenly Master, prove themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Remembering their fidelity in the hour of trial—how they stood by his cause, resisted temptations, by faith crucified the flesh, by the blood of the covenant overcame the world, how they denied themselves but not him, how they were of "another spirit" from the mass of mere professors, and how in purpose, if not always in practice, they "followed the Lord fully"—them also will he bring into the land whither they go, the ransomed of the Lord, a sacramental host, pilgrims to the heavenly Canaan.

## CALEB'S COURAGE.

For that courage—true, calm courage—which does not lie in insensibility to danger nor in the violent animal passion which may bear a coward forward as a whirlwind does the dust or a wave the sea-weed on its foaming crest, Caleb presents the very model of a soldier. How bravely he bears himself when the other spies prove traitors! With fire in his eye and resolution seated on his brow, he steps forth to cry, "Let us go up at once and possess the land! Away with these coward fears!" The speech this, be it observed, not of one who was to guard the camp or bring up the rear. Judah's place is in the front of battle. The bloody wave breaks first on that gallant tribe, and of all its warriors, first on Caleb, its prince and head. Nor was this bold proposal to face and fight the sons of Anak an empty boast, a mere bravado. Forty years thereafter his courage was put to that test, the portion of the land assigned him, at his own request, being held by the giant race whose descendant, Goliath of Gath, struck terror into the boldest hearts in Israel, as he went forth vaporing before their host, till he fell by the shepherd's sling, defying the armies of the living God. It was from the hands of giants Caleb wrung his inheritance. Undaunted by their towering stature, he met them, sword to sword and foot to foot, in the bloody field, the God in whom he trusted inspiring his heart with such courage and endowing his arm with such strength that they succumbed before his blows, their armor loudly clashing, and the very earth shaking in their fall.

The source of Caleb's courage, of a bravery so admirable and dauntless, is not far to seek. *He had faith in God;* therefore he did not fear the face of man, though that man were a giant, nor of death itself. From the same lofty source, and none other, the soldier of the cross, he who fights with foes more formidable than giants—the devil, the world and the flesh, that trinity of evils—is to draw his courage. No grace more necessary than that in one who would do his duty to Jesus and to his cause. Courage

to speak for Christ everywhere, and act for Christ always, is a grace of the highest value, yet one in which, alas! many a good man, to the dishonor of his Master and the loss of others, has been sadly wanting. The apostle Paul possessed it; and what he himself possessed in a degree so eminent, he enforced on his converts, saying, "Add to your faith virtue," or, as it were better translated, "courage." No greater bravery, indeed, in battle-fields than what the Christian may require! More of it may be needed to face the jeers of an ungodly world than a blazing battery of cannon.

In illustration of this, hear what a nobleman of ancient family and high rank and still higher piety has written in a very precious record which was lately given to the public. "I felt," he says, "that salvation must be sought and attained, though the path to it lay through fire and water, and that no hardships were worth a moment's consideration in comparison of so great a prize. In the same manner the pursuits of my life hitherto appeared utterly frivolous. They could not advance me one step on the road to heaven. I resolved to make an entire change in my life, to spend the whole day in the service of God and devote myself entirely to the promotion of his glory. Yet how to begin I knew not. I felt I ought earnestly to address every one I met, beginning with my own servants; that I ought to speak out, and not sneak into heaven by the back door. For several days, however, I did nothing. I shrunk from the idea of declaring myself, and dreaded the remarks of relatives, acquaintances and servants. I seriously debated with myself, since society presented such great difficulties in our way, whether we should not leave all and fly with our children to a distant land, where, living quite unknown, we might commence our new life with fewer outward impediments, and spend our days in prayer, praise and preaching to others Christ's gospel of salvation. It was in my mind to give up our inheritance, reserving only enough for our bare support, and taking leave of all our connections, to burn, as it were, our

ships behind us, and dying to this world, to live entirely for the next. To the objection that we should be deserting the station in which God had placed us, I urged that our first duty is the care of our own souls. I compared it to Lot flying out of Sodom. In giving up my hereditary rank and riches, I considered that I should injure no one. My children, being brought up in total ignorance of their origin, would have no cause for regret; and if religion be true, they would be incalculable gainers, since riches (if Christ be an authority) are a great hindrance in the way to heaven. For several days I debated this question with myself, and one consideration alone determined my conclusion on it in the negative. I could not reconcile it with my duty to leave my aged father."

These are the touching words of one who lived to openly avow his change and confess Christ before the world. He added to his faith courage. His circumstances needed it, and so do those of the humblest Christians. Nor shall we go without it if we seek God's help. He that gave Nicodemus, who once came stealing to Jesus under the cloud of night, courage to perform the last kind offices to the dead—He who gave the disciple that denied his Master before a woman courage to confess him before all the Jews and charge home on them the guilt of his innocent blood—He who turns the pliant sapling into a tree, that, with roots wrapped around the rocks, lifts its head on high and defies the storm,—He will make his feeblest followers "valiant for the truth"—bold to avow themselves the followers of Jesus, and say,

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his cause,
Maintain the glory of his cross,
And honor all his laws.

"Jesus, my Lord, I know his name,
His name is all my boast;
Nor will he leave my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost."

# XII.

## GIDEON.

A VALLEY abandoned to solitude, however picturesque and beautiful, wears a melancholy air. Its loneliness and silence are so oppressive as well as impressive that we would be glad to hear a dog bark or a cock crow, or in the blue smoke that wreathes up against gray crag or brown hillside see some sign of human life. The feelings, allied to sadness, such a scene produces are deepened by the green spots we ever and anon alight on, marked by nettles, a clump of decaying trees and some crumbling ruins. These ruins were once happy homes; children played on that daisy-sward; gray patriarchs sat under the shadow of these aged trees; hospitable fires blazed on these cold hearths; and from these roofless walls the voice of joy and gladness, of praise and prayer, echoed in other days.

But the land of Israel, when Gideon was raised up to be its deliverer, presented a yet sadder aspect. The forests into which some, and the idol groves into which others, of their beautiful hill-sides had been turned, were indications of departure from the pure faith of their fathers. The "evil heart of unbelief" and the fascinations and wiles of the daughters of the land, had turned these hitherto God-favored and God-protected sons of Jacob into worshipers of Baal and Ashtaroth, whose vile services they attempted to unite with the worship of Him who had said, "I will not give mine honor to another." In consequence, the happy estate which had thus far been the lot of the Israelites was

now at an end, and in place of fields of waving grain and fruitful vineyards, their land became a scene of desolation, presenting an aspect sadder than roofless ruins and deserted villages. The houses were there, but no children played about the doors; the fields, but they bore no crops; the pastures, but they fed no cattle; the hills, but they bleated with no flocks of sheep; and the people also, more unfortunate than the peasantry of Europe, whom other lands receive when their own casts them out, possessed no homes but such as they found in caves and dens and mountain crags. To this extremity had the country been reduced by the invasions of the hosts of Midian. With occasional periods of relaxation, and exceptional cases such as Gideon's, during seven long, weary years its wretched inhabitants had suffered—for disease always treads on the heels of want—the threefold scourge of war, pestilence and famine.

It were difficult to imagine a more painful contrast than that between the condition of Israel in these days and the prospects of their fathers on entering the land of Canaan. "Blessed," said Moses in his parting address to the tribes before they entered the promised land—"blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field; blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep; blessed shall be thy basket and thy store; blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; and the Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in all that thou settest thine hand unto." What a shower of blessings in the form of promises! and if anything could have comforted the people for the loss of Moses, it was the prospect of entering on such a splendid career of peace and prosperity as this picture presented. Nothing more beautiful than the picture; but, alas! contrasted with the future sorrows and sufferings of the nation, apparently not more unsubstantial the visions of a

dream—the brilliant arch that vanishes in the storm whose dark cloud it spans. It seemed as if the people had "looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble." No wonder, therefore, that when the angel appeared to Gideon by the oak at Ophrah, accosting him with these hopeful words, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor," his answer expressed the deepest disappointment. Looking around him on the desolation of his country, and at that moment in terror lest the Midianites should appear before he had got his corn threshed and buried out of their sight, no wonder that, in such afflictive circumstances, he returned this melancholy reply, "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?—the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

But whatever reasons Gideon and his countrymen had to mourn, they had none to murmur or cast blame on God. He had not failed in one jot or tittle of all he spake to their fathers by the lips of Moses; nor did their deserted homesteads and ravaged fields and empty stalls and silent hills belong to those mysteries of Providence it baffles the wisest to solve.

First, as to the question, "If the Lord be with us, why hath this befallen us?" that was easily answered. It finds a solution —a clear, sufficient answer—in the words with which Moses prefaced his series of beatitudes, the nail on which that string of pearls was suspended. "All these blessings," he said, "shall come on thee and overtake thee, *if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.*" They had not done so, nor was proof of that far to seek. It rose there, near by the threshing-floor, insulting God, in an altar erected to the worship of Baal, though the Lord had commanded them, saying, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Secondly, as to Gideon's complaint, "The Lord hath forsaken us," their trials proved the contrary. They are bastards, not sons, that grow up without chastisement; they are common, not

precious, stones that escape the lapidary's wheel; they are wild, not garden, trees that never bleed beneath the pruning-knife. "Whom God loveth," says the apostle, "he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son that he receiveth." Others, I may remark, besides Gideon, but with less reason or excuse, have fallen into his mistake. Nor when blow succeeds blow, and trials, like foaming waves, break on the back of trials, and we look on them through the dim and distorting medium of our tears, is the complaint unnatural, "The Lord hath forgotten me, my Lord hath forsaken me." Nevertheless it is a mistake, and a great mistake —a feeling that should be resisted by the people of God, since it tends to defeat his gracious purpose, and aggravate instead of alleviate the sufferings by which he seeks to sanctify and draw them more closely to himself. God has no other object than these in afflicting his children; nor is it possible for fancy to imagine anything more touching or tender than the manner in which, as one hurt by their unworthy suspicions, he replies, "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? She may forget: yet will not I forget thee. I have graven thee on the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me."

To prepare the ground for sowing, the husbandman, if I may say so, *afflicts* it—he drives a ploughshare through its bosom and tears asunder its clods with iron teeth. Similar was the purpose for which God afflicted Israel by the hand of Midian. That object accomplished, as the sower follows the ploughman to cast seed into the furrows his share has drawn, God sent a prophet to preach to his people. With a rock for his pulpit, with repentance for his text, and for his church some mountain hollow, where ghastly crowds, creeping from their caves, assembled to hear him, this preacher set forth their sins as the cause of their sorrows, calling them to repentance. Nor, such a forerunner of Gideon as John Baptist was of Christ, did he call in vain. Tears course down the furrows of famished cheeks. The voice of suf-

fering ascends to heaven sanctified by the voice of sorrow; confessions of penitence mingle with groans of pain; the caves and dens they had turned into dwellings they turn into oratories; and now another ear than the rocks hears their prayers—the cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" The set time is come. Past is that darkest hour which precedes the dawn. Heaven's gate is thrown open, and an angel, leaving it, cleaves his way earthward to raise up in Gideon one who should break the yoke of Midian, and rise the deliverer of the oppressed.

Such was the order of God's government and dealings then, and such, it is important to observe, it is still. The people of Israel were to be relieved of their sorrows, but not till they had repented of their sins. Penitence must precede peace. Sins not repented of are sins not forgiven; and since true joy is as certainly born of godly sorrow as bright days of gray mornings, or rather day itself of the dark womb of night, they, therefore, who fancy themselves forgiven the sins which they have never sorrowed for, only deceive themselves, saying, "Peace, peace! when no peace is to be found."

The story of Gideon is written for our instruction. Nor will it have been written in vain if, seeking to obtain deliverance from the bondage of sin and, to use Paul's words, "work out our salvation," we take him as a pattern. Copying and cultivating the qualities which contributed so materially to his success, let us enter on our own battles in the spirit of his famous cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Gideon teaches us to be humble and self-distrustful. In his history the curtain rises on a scene of obscure and humble life—a threshing-floor in some sequestered nook, where we see a man, to beat out the grain, driving bullocks round and round over some corn. It has happily escaped the pillage of the Midianites, and he intends to conceal it in the ground for further safety. This countryman is Gideon, the future deliverer and judge of Israel, and that his humble task. Fired with ambition, it might

have been natural for him to leave such obscure employments to others, and panting to deliver his country and also distinguish himself, aim at something better suited to his talents and position. "What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?" was his question to the conquered and captive kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. "As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king," was their answer. Now this answer, though fatal to themselves (for their victims were Gideon's brethren), presents his case as one of those where the body seems to take form from the mind it lodges, and to reveal, by a certain nobleness of bearing and expression, the greatness of the soul within. Yet Gideon, though belonging—if we may judge from this—to the order of Nature's nobility, abandoned himself to no dreams of ambition, but was called of God from the quiet, diligent and contented discharge of the humblest duties to honors and usefulness he never dreamed of. If God should call him to a higher place, well; if not, also well. In this combination of a humble disposition and a brilliant destiny, Gideon was by no means singular. He is one of a constellation of men who have emerged from obscurity and the contented discharge of humble offices to shine as stars. Christ's call, for example, found Matthew at the receipt of custom; Simon and Andrew, James and John, mending their nets on the shores of Galilee. Moses got his call when discharging the duties of a shepherd in the land of Midian, and David his, when, a dutiful son, he herded his father's flocks on the hills of Bethlehem. It is the busy, not the idle, not such as are dissatisfied, but contented with their lot and do its duties well, whom God usually calls to posts of honor and of distinguished usefulness.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit"—the astonishing exclamation with which our Lord opened his Sermon on the Mount, and at once took his hearers captive—finds no more appropriate illustration than Gideon offers. "The Lord be with thee, thou mighty man of valor"—the words with which the heavenly

messenger first accosted him—had fallen on a self-confident and ambitious spirit like a spark on a train of gunpowder, setting it in a blaze, firing it instantly. And had such been Gideon's temper, to the call, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel; have not I sent thee?" how had he leapt up, and casting away the ox-goad to draw the sword, with the blare of trumpet summoned his country to arms! But a humble, modest, self-distrustful man, he is overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task. Measuring it and himself, the difference is such that he deems it hopeless; and eager to escape from an enterprise in which he can anticipate nothing but certain failure, he cries, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh; and I am the least in my father's house!" Few have so thrust office and honor away. Nor does he venture to accept them till assured by a miracle that his call is from heaven—till he sees fire flash from the cold rock, and the angel, at whose touch it came, leap on the altar and ascend to heaven in its flames.

History offers many remarkable parallels, but none perhaps more remarkable than that between the self-distrust and diffidence of Moses and the self-distrust and diffidence of Gideon. In this they present a remarkable and instructive contrast to the ready confidence with which the disciples of our Lord—by nature very inferior men—responded to his call. It was from no aversion to the work that both Moses the leader, and Gideon the deliverer, of Israel shrunk from it, but from the very humble estimate they had formed of their own powers. The disciples seem to have been troubled with no such scruples, but the contrary. Their mutual jealousies and unseemly strifes for precedence argue a self-sufficient spirit. So strong was this in Simon that swelling waves and roaring storm were not formidable enough to deter him from an attempt to rival his Master and also walk upon the sea—in Thomas, that when Jesus, by repairing to Bethany, was to put his life in jeopardy, troubled with no mis-

givings, he said, "Let us go also and die with him"—in the whole band, that amid the dangers of that ever-memorable night in which our Lord was betrayed, they made professions heroic and brave as Peter's, declaring, "We will die with thee rather than deny thee."

But the contrast between the spirit and temper in which Moses and Gideon on the one hand, and the disciples on the other, entered on their respective vocations, is not more remarkable than that between the manner in which they filled them. With Moses returning to the court of Pharaoh to beard the haughty tyrant, where he sits armed with imperial power and surrounded by those that obey his nod, compare Simon Peter, cowering before a woman's eye, and skulking away from observation and her questions into the darkness of the night. With Gideon advancing at the head of a handful of men against the whole host of Midian, or hanging in pursuit on their flying columns, compare the disciples as, struck with terror, they scatter and fly from the garden where they have left their Master a prisoner in the hands of his cruel enemies. From these cases, how should we learn that our strength lies in our weakness—in our sense of it—in what fosters that frame of mind which Paul expressed by this remarkable paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong"! The self-distrust which cries to God for help and works out salvation with fear and trembling—which, casting away all confidence in an arm of flesh, clings to the arm of Jesus—which says with Moses, "Unless thou go with us, let us not go up," and with Jacob, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me"—like the army which, drawn out in battle array, was seen to first fall on its knees in prayer,—this is the sure presage, not of defeat, but of victory. In the self-distrust which prompts to prayer, and makes a man cast himself on God, and substitute for human weakness the power of a divine omnipotence, we may say, as Samson did of his unshorn locks, "In that our great strength lies."

Gideon teaches us the importance of having our faith strength-

ened. Any means Gideon possessed for accomplishing the work he had undertaken were, humanly speaking, altogether inadequate. He had not a chance of success, if it could be said with truth, "There is no hope for him in God." Faith being then, as faith is still, the medium of connection between human weakness and divine power, it was his mainstay. He was thrown entirely on its strength. The ship does not ride the storm otherwise than by the hold her anchor takes of the solid ground. By that, which lies in the calm depths below, as little moved by the waves that swell and roll and foam above as by the winds that lash them into fury, she resists the gale and rides the billows of the stormiest sea. But her safety depends on something else also. When masts are struck and sails are furled, and, anchored off reef or rocky shore, she is laboring in the wild tumult for her life, it likewise lies in the strength of her cable and of the iron arms that grasp the solid ground. By these she hangs to it, and thus not only the firm earth, but their strength also, is her security. Let the flukes of the anchor or strands of the cable snap, and her fate is sealed. Nothing can avert it. Powerless to resist and swept forward by the sea, she drives on ruin, and hurled against an iron shore, her timbers are crushed to pieces like a shell. And what anchor and cable are to her, the faith by which man makes God's strength his own was to Gideon, and is still to believers in their times of trial.

Aware of that, and teaching us by his example a lesson of the highest practical importance, Gideon prepared for his enterprise by seeking to have his faith strengthened, deeming that of such transcendent consequence as to ask, what God kindly granted, a miracle—ay, two miracles—to strengthen it. The time was coming to him—as probably in sore temptations and heavy trials, and certainly in the awful hour of death, it shall come to us—when he would have to stand face to face with difficulties no mere human energy could overcome, and dangers no mere human fortitude could meet. There could be no help for him then in

man, and should his faith fail, there was none in God. Before the terrible figure of the giant, and in other such circumstances, David said, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High;" and so, to feed his courage from a similar source, Gideon wished for something to remember and to rest on, as proving that God was with him of a truth—something to shine like a star when the night was at the darkest—something to feel like a rock below his feet when the flood was highest.

For that purpose, casting himself on the kindness and compassion of God, he spreads out a fleece on the floor, saying, "If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, let there be dew on the fleece only; but let it be dry on all the earth beside." It fell out as he wished. With foot that leaves no trace or trail upon the grass, he goes next morning to examine the fleece, and there it lies, all glistening with the dews of night, to yield to his hands, as they wring it out, a bowlful of water. Peter only needed Christ to say, "Come," and without a thought or moment's hesitation he sprang from the boat out on the sea. In Gideon's circumstances he would have at once dropped the fleece to draw the sword and rush down on the hosts that lay in the valley of Israel like grasshoppers for multitude. Not so Gideon. Perhaps by nature one of those who, like the granite that is ill to work but is long to wear, though tenacious of their purpose when it is formed are slow to form it, he is not yet satisfied. He has heard how much both Abraham and Moses, in their days, ventured to request of God. He also will venture, and ask another miracle. Here it is: "Let not thine anger be hot against me," he says; "I will speak but this once: let it now be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew." Of the two this would be the most obvious miracle, wool being more ready than almost anything else to show signs of dew, as we have observed in beads standing thick on the tufts that furze or thorn had plucked from the passing flock when grass and ground seemed dry. The request—not on Gideon's part one of presumption, but of self-dis-

trust—is granted; and now he can say with David and many else, "Thy gentleness has made me great." Next morning sees the whole earth "sown with Orient pearl;" liquid diamonds top the spikes of grass and hang sparkling in the sunbeams on every bush, as Gideon, with feet bathed at each step in dew, draws near the fleece. He sees it, and has no more anxiety. No bead glistens on its surface, nor drop of water falls into the bowl, as, to make assurance doubly sure, he wrings the fleece in his hands. Now he is all faith. He has no further doubts. Recollecting the miracles of the fleece, he looks unmoved on the swarms of Midian; unmoved, sees his army of more than thirty thousand men by coward flight diminished to one-third their number; unmoved, sees the ten thousand, like a snow-wreath on which winds have blown and the sun has beaten, reduced to three hundred men. At the head of so small a band, and with no other instruments of assault but a lamp and empty pitcher and trumpet, he stands confident and ready. The fleece is his battle banner. In the faith it has strengthened, if not created, he steals down in the darkness on the sleeping camp. On a sudden—to have them answered by three hundred more—he flashes his light and blows his trumpet, and with his battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" adds to the confusion and carnage of a scene where the Midianites, seized with a sudden panic, bury their swords in each other's bosoms.

He had a great work to do. But so has every Christian. With such temptations, perhaps, before us as have proved formidable, if not fatal, to the greatest saints—with trials to encounter that have wrung complaints from pious lips—with probably great fights of affliction to endure—with death and its gloomy terrors certainly to face—we shall need all the faith that pains and prayer can provide. The righteous scarcely are saved, many of them entering the harbor as a vessel that, with masts sprung and sails torn to ribbons and bulwarks gone by the board, bears marks of storm and danger and a sore battle for life. Paul

himself trembled lest he should be a castaway; and in view of our trials, we should labor, according to his advice, to make our calling and election sure, to have the witness of God's Spirit with our own that we have been born again, and have certainly passed from death to life. By communion with God, let us seek to get our faith so strengthened that its trials may prove its most signal triumphs; and our spiritual vision growing clearer as our dying eye grows darker, a better world rising to view as this fades from the sight, glory opening over our heads as a grave opens beneath our feet, the voice of angels falling on our ear as it grows dull and duller to all earthly sounds,—they who bend over us to catch life's last low whisper may hear us saying, "My heart and my flesh faint and fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for evermore."

Gideon teaches us to make thorough work of what belongs to our deliverance from sin.

In closing the account of what God did for him, and through him for his people, the historian says, "Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more." And how was this accomplished? The remarkable victory God wrought for Gideon, without any effort on his part, may be regarded as a type of that greater, better victory which, without any effort on ours, God's Son wrought for us when he took our nature and our sins upon him, dying, the just for the unjust, that we might be saved. Gideon followed up this victory by calling all possible resources to his aid. He summoned the whole country to arms, as, accompanied by his famous three hundred men, he hung on the skirts of the broken host, and with sword bathed in their blood cut down the fugitives—kings, princes, captains and common soldiers—with an eye that knew no pity and a hand that did not spare. Now, it is to work as thorough that God calls all his followers. Extermination of our sins is the work that should engage our utmost efforts and inspire all our prayers. Jesus, and he alone, has won the victory and pur-

chased our salvation; but honored to be fellow-laborers with him and God, we are called to work it out. By resolute self-denial, by constant watchfulness, by earnest prayer, by the diligent use of every means of grace, and, above all, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we are to labor to cast sin out of our hearts—crucifying it—killing it—thrusting it through and through with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, till its power is broken, and there is no more life in it, and it becomes hideous and hateful as a rotting corpse, and it can be said of the sins that were once our cruel masters and oppressors, *They lift up their heads no more.*

This is no easy work. But heaven is not to be reached by easy-going people. Like a beleaguered city, where men scale the walls and swarm in at the deadly breach, the violent take it by force. The rest it offers is for the weary. The crowns it confers are for warriors' brows. Its rewards are bestowed on such as, cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye to cast it away, deem it profitable that one of their members should perish, than that their whole body should be cast into hell-fire. Nor was Gideon's easy work. His limbs were weary running, his hand was weary slaying, and the way was long and the sun high and hot, when he arrived with his three hundred followers, panting and exhausted, at Jordan's shore. To sit down? No. It had been sweet to lie on its green banks, and, lulled to sleep by the song of birds and murmur of the stream, rest under its cool shades a while; but bent on their purpose, they dashed right into the waters, and stemming the flood, passed over, "he and the three hundred men, faint, yet pursuing." "Faint, yet pursuing," be that our chosen motto. Till we are dead to sin and sin is dead to us, be it our daily work to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; and while asking that the God of hope would give us all joy and peace in believing, be the prayer we daily offer for ourselves that of St. Paul for his Thessalonian converts, "THE VERY GOD OF PEACE SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY."

# XIII.

## JEPHTHAH.

JEPHTHAH is a wild, lawless freebooter. His irregular birth in the half-civilized tribes beyond the Jordan is the keynote to his life. The whole scene is laid in those pastoral uplands. Not Bethel or Shiloh, but Mizpeh, the ancient watch-tower which witnessed the parting of Jacob and Laban, is the place of meeting, Ammon, one of the descendants of Lot, is now the assailant. The war springs out of the disputes of that first settlement. The battle sweeps over the whole tract of forest, from Gilead to the borders of Moab. The quarrel which arises after the battle between the Transjordanic tribe and the proud Western Ephraimites is embittered by the recollection of taunts and quarrels, then, no doubt, full of gall and wormwood, now hardly intelligible. "Fugitives of Ephraim are ye: Gilead is among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites." Was it, as Ewald conjectures, some allusion to the lost history of the days when the half tribe Manasseh separated from its Western brethren? If it was, the Gileadites had now their turn—"the fugitives of the Ephraimites," as they are called in evident allusion to the former taunt, are caught in their flight at the fords of the Jordan—the scene of their victory over the Midianites—and ruthlessly slain.

In the savage taunt of Jephthah to the Ephraimites, compared with the mild reply of Gideon to the same insolent tribe, we

have a measure of the inferiority of Eastern to Western Palestine—of the degree to which Jephthah sank below his age and Gideon rose above it. But in his own country, as well as in the Church at large, it is the other part of Jephthah's story which has been most keenly remembered. The fatal vow at the battle of Aroer belongs naturally to the spasmodic efforts of the age, like the vows of Samson or Saul in the Jewish Church of this period, or of Clovis or Bruno in the Middle Ages. But its literal execution could hardly have taken place had it been undertaken by any more under the moral restraints, even of that lawless age, than the freebooter Jephthah, nor in any other part of the Holy Land than that separated by the Jordan valley from the more regular institutions of the country. Moab and Ammon, the neighboring tribes to Jephthah's native country, were the parts of Palestine where human sacrifice lingered longest. It was the first thought of Balak in the extremity of his terror (Mic. vi. 7); it was the last expedient of Balak's successor in the war with Jehoshaphat. 2 Kings iii. 27. Moloch, to whom even before they entered Palestine the Israelites had offered human sacrifices (Ezek. xx. 26), and who is always spoken of as the deity who was thus honored, was especially the god of Ammon. It was but natural that a desperate soldier like Jephthah, breathing the same atmosphere, physical and social, should make the same vow, and having made it, adhere to it. There was no high priest or prophet at hand to rebuke it. They were far away in the hostile tribe of Ephraim. He did what was right in his own eyes, and as such the transaction is described. Mostly it is but an inadequate account to give of these doubtful acts, to say that they are mentioned in the sacred narrative without commendation. Often where no commendation is expressly given it is distinctly implied. But here the story itself trembles with the mixed feeling of the action. The description of Jephthah's wild character prepares us for some dark catastrophe. The admiration for his heroism and that of his daughter struggles for

mastery in the historian with indignation at the dreadful deed. He is overwhelmed by the natural grief of a father. "Oh, oh, my daughter! thou hast crushed me! thou hast crushed me!" She rises at once to the grandeur of her situation as the instrument whereby the victory had been won. If the fatal word had escaped his lips, she was content to die, "forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance of thee upon thine enemies, even the children of Ammon." It is one of the points of sacred history, where the likeness of classical times mingles with the Hebrew devotion. It recalls to us the story of Idomeneus and his son, of Agamemnon and Iphigenia. And still more closely do we draw near, as our attention is fixed on the Jewish maiden, to a yet more pathetic scene. Her grief is the exact anticipation of the lament of Antigone, sharpened by the peculiar horror of the Hebrew women at a childless death—descending with no bridal festivity, with no nuptial torches, to the dark chambers of the grave. Into the mountains of Gilead she retires for two months, plunging deeper and deeper into the gorges of the mountains, to bewail her lot, with the maidens who had come out with her to greet the returning conqueror. Then comes the awful end, from which the sacred writer, as it were, averts his eyes. "He did with her according to his vow." In her the house of Jephthah became extinct. But for years afterward, even to the verge of the monarchy, the dark deed was commemorated. Four days in every year the maidens of Israel went up into the mountains of Gilead—and here the Hebrew language lends itself to the ambiguous feeling of the narrative itself—"to praise" or "to lament" "the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite."

The deep pathos of the original story, and the lesson which it reads of the heroism of the father and daughter, is to be admired and loved in the midst of the fierce superstitions across which it plays like a sunbeam on a stormy sea. So regarded, it may still be remembered with a sympathy at least as great as is given to the heathen immolations just cited, which awaken a sentiment of

compassion wherever they are known. The sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, taking it at its worst, was not a human sacrifice in the gross sense of the word—not a slaughter of an unwilling victim, as when the Gaul and Greek were buried alive in the Roman Forum, but the willing offering of a devoted heart, to free, as she supposed, her father and her country from a terrible obligation. It was, indeed, as Josephus says, an act in itself hateful to God. But, nevertheless, it contained just that one redeeming feature of pure obedience and love which is the distinguishing mark of all true sacrifice, and which communicates to the whole story those elements of tenderness and nobleness well drawn out of it by two modern poets, to each of whom, in their different ways, may be applied what was said by Goethe of the first—that at least one function committed to him was that of giving life and form to the incidents and characters of the Old Testament:

"Though the virgins of Salem lament,
Be the judge and the hero unbent;
I have won the great battle for thee,
And my father and country are free.

"When this blood of thy giving has gush'd,
When the voice that thou lovest is hush'd,
Let my memory still be thy pride,
And forget not I smiled as I died."

*Byron's Hebrew Melodies.*

Or, in the still more exact language of the more recent poet, Tennyson:

"The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with radiance light,
With timbrel and with song.

* * * * * *

"'My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love,
Down to a silent grave.

"'And I went mourning, "No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song.

"'Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

* * * * * *

"'When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equal'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

"'It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

* * * * * *

"'Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minnith!'"

Upon the gloom of this painful history an ethereal brightness shines. What can be more beautiful, more wonderful, than this pure and lovely maid, brought up among bandits and far from the tabernacle of God, thus freely and sweetly giving up herself as a thank-offering for the victories of Israel? And who can fail to see, in this story of the meek and self-sacrificing maid, a marvelous and mysterious adumbration of a better sacrifice of another soul, of an only child, perfectly free and voluntary, and of virgin holiness and heavenly purity—the sacrifice of Christ, who gave his spotless soul to death for our sakes? Like him, she offers herself a willing sacrifice, and in the full foresight of death she comes down from her mountain liberty at the appointed time to offer up her virgin soul. Her life is given, the price, as it were, of Israel's victory over the enemy. Her suffering was not for her own sin, but through the error of another. Jephthah's

daughter gave her body willingly as a sacrifice, yet she wept with her companions; Christ our Lord gave his soul willingly an offering for sin, yet he wept tears of blood.

As to the act of Jephthah, the brevity and obscurity of the record are full of significance. Let those who are most forward to condemn look well to themselves. The subject is painful; but are there no immolations of children in our day and within the borders of our churches? On this point, one of the greatest living teachers of the Church expresses himself in words that are full of solemn interest.

"Is there not an immolation of children," says Bishop Wordsworth, "worse than Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter? She was a conscious and willing victim, offering herself to be sacrificed for the performance of her father's vow, because he had conquered the enemies of Israel. Her body was sacrificed, but her spirit was untouched. But there are moral immolations of children by their parents—immolations of their immortal souls to Mammon, to the god of money-getting—immolations to Belial, the spirit of license and lust; and there are spiritual immolations of unconscious victims—immolations of young maidens in the flower of life and beauty to the solitude and seclusion of a cloister, into which they are beguiled with soft speeches, when they kneel before Christian altars crowned as victims, attired in pure white robes, as if they were brides of Christ. Therefore let Christian churches meditate on the history of Jephthah, and let them apply it to themselves. Will it not be more tolerable for Jephthah in the day of judgment than for those who offer such human sacrifices as these—sacrifices, it may be, not only of body, but of soul?"

# XIV.

## SAMSON.

FROM the lawlessness of Jephthah on the extreme eastern frontier of Palestine, we pass at once to a manifestation of the same tendency in a different, but not less incontestable, form on the extreme western frontier. At the same time the new enemies, in whose grasp we now find the Israelites, remind us that we are approaching a new epoch in their history.

"The Philistines" now present themselves to our notice, if not absolutely for the first time, yet for the first time as a powerful and hostile nation. In the original conquest by Joshua they are hardly mentioned. Their name appears to indicate their late arrival—"the strangers;" and the scattered indications of their origin lead to the conclusion that they were settlers from some foreign country. Unlike the rest of the inhabitants of Canaan, they were uncircumcised, and appear to have stood on a lower level of civilization. They were almost, it may be said, the laughing-stock of their livelier and quicker neighbors, from their dull, heavy stupidity; the easy prey of the rough humor of Samson, or of the agility and cunning of the diminutive David.

Possibly the Philistines may have been called in by the older Avites as allies against the invading Israelites, and then, as in the ancient fable, made themselves their masters. Be that as it may, the Philistines were the longest and deadliest enemies of the chosen people, whose hostilities, commencing in the close

of the period of the Judges, lasted through the first two reigns of the monarchy, and were not finally extinguished till the time of Hezekiah.

Of all the tribes of Israel, that on which these new-comers pressed most heavily was the small tribe of Dan, already straitened between the mountains and the sea, and communicating with its seaport, Joppa, only by passing through the Philistine territory. Out of this tribe, accordingly, the deliverer came. It was in Zorah, planted on a high conical hill overlooking the plain, which, from its peculiar relation to these hills, was called "the root of Dan," that the birth of the child took place, who was by a double tie connected with the history of this peculiar period as the first conqueror of the Philistines and as the first recorded instance of a Nazarite. In both respects he was the beginner of that work which a far greater than he—the prophet Samuel—carried to a completion. But what in Samuel were but subordinate functions, in Samson were supreme, and in him were further united with an eccentricity of character and career that gave him his singular position amongst the Israelite heroes.

This was the age of vows, and it is implied in the account that such special vows as that which marked the life of Samson were common. The order of Nazarites, which we find described in the code of the Mosaic law, was already in existence. It was the nearest approach to a monastic institution that the Jewish Church contained. It was, as its name implies, a separation from the rest of the nation, partly by the abstinence from all intoxicating drink, partly by the retention of the savage covering of long flowing tresses of hair. The order thus begun continued till the latest times. It was as the first fruits of this institution, no less than as his country's champion, that the birth of Samson is ushered in with a solemnity of inauguration which, whether we adopt the more coarse and literal representation of Josephus, or the more shadowy and refined representation of the sacred narrative, seems to announce the coming of a greater event than that which is

comprised in the merely warlike career of the conqueror of the Philistines.

Whenever the son of Manoah appeared in later life, he was always known by the Nazarite mark. The early vow of his mother was always testified by his shaggy, untonsured head, and by the seven sweeping locks, twisted together yet distinct, which hung over his shoulders; and in all his wild wanderings and excesses amidst the vineyards of Sorek and Timnath, he is never reported to have touched the juice of one of their abundant grapes.

But these were his only indications of an austere life. It is one of the many distinctions between the manners of the East and West, between ancient and modern forms of religious feeling, that the Jewish chief, whose position most nearly resembles that of the founder of a monastic order, should be the most frolicsome, irregular, uncultivated creature that the nation ever produced. Not only was celibacy no part of his Nazarite obligations, but not even ordinary purity of life. He was full of the spirits and the pranks, no less than of the strength, of a giant. His name, which Josephus interprets in the sense of "strong," was still more characteristic. He was the "sunny"—the bright and beaming, though wayward, likeness of the great luminary which the Hebrews delighted to compare to a "giant rejoicing to run his course," "a bridegroom coming forth out of his chamber." Nothing can disturb his radiant good humor. His most valiant, his most cruel, actions are done with a smile on his face and a jest in his mouth. It relieves his character from the sternness of Phœnician fanaticism. As a peal of hearty laughter breaks in upon the despondency of individual sorrow, so the joviality of Samson becomes a pledge of the revival of the greatness of his nation. It is brought out in the strongest contrast with the brute coarseness and stupidity of his Philistine enemies, here, as throughout the sacred history, the butt of Israelitish wit and Israelitish craft.

Look at his successive acts in this light, and they assume a fresh significance. Out of his first achievement he draws the materials for his playful riddle. His second and third achievements are practical jests on the largest scale. The mischievousness of the conflagration of the cornfields by means of the jackals is subordinate to the ludicrous aspect of the adventure, as, from the hill of Zorah, the contriver of the scheme watched the streams of fire spreading through cornfields and orchards in the plain below. The whole point of the massacre of the thousand Philistines lies in the cleverness with which their clumsy triumph is suddenly turned into discomfiture, and their discomfiture is celebrated by the punning turn of the hero, not forgotten even in the exaltation or the weariness of victory: "With the jawbone of an *ass* have I slain one *mass*, two *masses;* with the jawbone of an ass I have slain an *ox*load of men." The carrying off the gates of Gaza derives all its force from the neatness with which the Philistine watchmen are outdone on the very spot where they thought themselves secure. The answers with which he puts off the inquisitiveness of Delilah derive their vivacity from the quaintness of the devices which he suggests and the ease with which his foolish enemies fall into trap after trap, as if only to give their conqueror amusement. The closing scenes of his life breathe throughout the same terrible, yet grotesque, irony. When the captive warrior is called forth, in the merriment of his persecutors, to exercise for the last time the well-known raillery of his character, he appears as the great jester or buffoon of the nation; the word employed expresses alike the roars of laughter and the wild gambols by which he "made them sport;" and as he puts forth the last energy of his vengeance, the final effort of his expiring strength, it is in a stroke of broad and savage humor that his indignant spirit passes away. "O Lord Jehovah, remember me now; and strengthen me now, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged of the Philistines" [not for both of my lost eyes, but] "for *one* of my two eyes." That grim playfulness,

strong in death, lends its paradox even to the act of destruction itself, and overflows into the touch of triumphant satire, with which the pleased historian closes his story: "The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

There is no portion of the sacred narrative more stamped with a peculiar local color than the account of Samson. Unlike the heroes of Grecian, Celtic or Teutonic romance whose deeds are scattered over the whole country or the whole continent where they lived—Hercules or Arthur or Charlemagne—the deeds of Samson are confined to that little corner of Palestine in which was pent up the fragment of the tribe to which he belonged. He is the one champion of Dan. To him, if to any one, must be the reference in the blessing of Jacob: "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." In his biting wit and cunning ambuscades, which baffled the horses and chariots of Philistia, may probably be seen "the serpent by the way, the adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."

The scene of his death is the great temple of the fish-god at Gaza, in the extremity of the Philistine district. But his grave was in the same spot which had nourished his first youthful hopes. From the time of Gideon downward the tombs of the judges have been carefully specified. In no case, however, does the specification suggest a more pathetic image than in the description of the funeral procession, in which the dead hero is borne by his brothers and his kinsmen "up" the steep ascent to his native hills, and laid, as it would seem, beside the father who had watched with pride his early deeds, "between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burial-place of Manoah his father."

> "When all abroad was rumor'd that this day
> Samson should be brought forth to show the people
> Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games,
> I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded

Not to be absent at that spectacle.
The building was a spacious theatre,
Half round, on two main pillars vaulted high,
With seats, where all the lords, and each degree
Of sort, might sit in order to behold;
The other side was open, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand:
I among these aloof obscurely stood.
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer and wine,
When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a public servant brought,
In their state livery clad; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went armèd guards,
Both horse and foot, before him and behind
Archers and slingers, cataphracts and spears.
At sight of him, the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamoring their god with praise,
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He, patient, but undaunted, where they led him,
Came to the place; and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd,
To heave, pull, draw or break, he still perform'd
All with incredible, stupendous force,
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission' sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tired to let him lean a while
With both his arms on those two massy pillars,
That to the archèd roof gave main support.
He, unsuspicious, led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head a while inclined
And eyes fast fix'd he stood, as one who pray'd
Or some great matter in his mind revolved;
At last with head erect thus cried aloud:
Hitherto, lords, what your commands imposed
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld:
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater,

As with amaze shall strike all who behold.
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd:
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, these two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came, and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
Lords, ladies, captains, counselors or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only
Of this, but each Philistian city round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson, with these inmixed, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself;
Oh dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Samson hath quit himself like Samson,
And heroicly hath finished a life heroic.
On his enemies revenged, victorious
He lies among his slain, self-kill'd,
Join'd in his death with foes more numerous
Than all his life had slain before."

# XV.

## BOAZ.

FARMING, rather than gardening in the ordinary sense of the word, is man's oldest occupation; in point of time, at least, claiming priority of all others. Instituted by divine authority, and pursued by man in his primeval innocence—with the ordinances of marriage and the Sabbath day—it is a vestige of Eden. The business of a farmer, as regards both its age and origin, is invested with a dignity that belongs to no other profession.

> "The sacred plough
> Employ'd the kings and fathers of mankind
> In ancient times."

Besides, it is probable, if not certain, that it is the one employment in which man had God for his teacher. The heathens themselves represent the gods as having taught him how to cultivate corn; and in this, as in many of their other legends, they have preserved a valuable fragment of ancient truth. While some trades are of very recent origin—photography, for example—and while many have advanced to their present stage of perfection by slow steps—as spinning, from the simple distaff, still often used in Brittany and sometimes in remote parts of Scotland, to the complicated machines that whirl amid the dust and din of crowded factories—it is a remarkable fact that the cereal grasses—wheat, barley, and other grains which the farmer now cultivates—were cultivated four thousand years ago. Forming

new fabrics; discovering new metals; learning how, as in ships, to make iron swim—the sun, as in photographs, to paint portraits —the lightning, as in telegraphs, to carry messages—and fire and water, as in locomotives, to whirl us along the ground with the speed of an eagle's wing—man has, to use the words of Scripture, even in our own time, "found out many inventions." Yet he has not added one to the number of our cereals during the last four thousand years. He appears, in fact, to have started on his career with a knowledge of these—a knowledge he could have obtained from none but God. He it was who taught him the arts of agriculture—what plants to cultivate, and how to cultivate them. There is that, indeed, in the nature of wheat, barley and the other cereals which goes almost to demonstrate that God specially created them for man's use and originally committed them to his care. These plants are unique in two respects—first, unlike others the fruits or roots of which we use for food, they are found wild nowhere on the face of the whole earth; and secondly, unlike others also, they cannot prolong their existence independent of man, without his care and culture.

For example, let a field which has been sown with wheat, barley or oats be abandoned to the course of nature, and what happens? The following year a scanty crop, springing from the grain it had shed, may rise in thin stalks on the uncultivated soil, but in a few summers more every vestige of it has vanished, "nor left a wrack behind."

A more than curious, this is an important, fact. It proves that those grains which form his main subsistence cannot maintain themselves without the hand and help of man; and proving that, it proves this also, that man started on his career a tiller of the ground—no such being as infidels, in their hatred of the Bible, represent him to have been, a naked savage, ignorant alike of arts and letters, little raised in intelligence above the wild animals in whose dens he sought a home and of whose prey he sought a share. This fact in natural history corroborates the

testimony of Scripture, and shows us, in fields where every stalk stands up a living witness for the truth of the Bible, the revelations of God's word visibly written on the face of Nature. Waving with golden corn and sounding with the songs of reapers, these fields carry the thoughtful mind back to the days when God first set man to till the ground, and, suggestive of Eden, they prompt the wish that, with its primeval employments, more of its primeval innocence were found among our rural population.

The scene before me, as I write these words, suggests another view of the occupation in which Boaz spent his days. Beyond the estuary of the Dee, over whose broad sands, celebrated in tragic song, the tide, flecked with the sails of shipping craft and fishing-boats, has rolled, lies, a few miles off, the winding shore of Wales, the land rising gently from the beach in corn and pasture fields to heights over which a picturesque range of mountains heaves itself up against the evening sky. Along that low shore lie scattered towns and villages, whose tall chimneys, dwarfing tower and steeple, pour out their smoke to pollute the air, and cast a murky veil on the smiling face of Nature. These bespeak the trades they pursue who, leaving the husbandman to his cheerful labors on the green surface of the earth, penetrate its bowels to rob them of their hidden treasures—the mine of its coals and the mountains of their metals. But these, valuable as they are, many hands as they employ, and much as they contribute to the influence and wealth of the country, are undergoing a process of exhaustion. Some think their limit will be soon reached, and are already bewailing the prospect when, with fires quenched in ruined furnaces, and spindles rusting in silent mills, and ships rotting in unfrequented harbors, Britain shall bid a long farewell to all her greatness. But when mines are empty, and furnaces stand quenched and cold, and deep silence reigns in the caverns where the pick of the pitman sounded, the husbandman shall still plough the soil. His, the first man's, shall

probably be the last man's, employment. Continued throughout those millennial years when, with swords turned into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks, "the whole earth is at rest and is quiet," the archangel's trumpet shall scare the peasant at the plough or summon him from the harvest-field. Fit emblem of the blessings of saving grace, the bounties of the soil are exhaustless. Husbandry will thus prove, as it is the oldest, the most permanent, of all employments; and since it produces the nation's food, and is, according to many, the true source of its wealth, there is none with which the public welfare is so extensively and intimately bound up.

The occupation which Boaz followed rises still higher in importance when we look at the multitudes it employs. Great as we are in commerce and manufactures—clothing nations with our fabrics, covering every sea with ships, and carrying the produce of our arts to every shore—the cultivation of the soil employs a larger number of hands than any other trade. And thus, if "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" be a sound and noble adage, the temporal, moral and spiritual interests of our agricultural population should bulk very large in the eyes of Christian patriots. Now, these interests turn to a great extent on the manner in which those who follow Boaz's occupation discharge their duties; and it is therefore a matter of thankfulness that in him the Book which instructs both kings and beggars, peers and peasants, how to live, sets before us a model farmer. Happy our country were all its farmers like him, and all their servants like his!—making rural innocence a reality, not merely a poet's dream or the graceful ornament of a speech. Let us study this pattern.

## HIS DILIGENCE IN BUSINESS.

Boaz was not one whom necessity compelled to labor. He was rich, and is indeed called "a mighty man of wealth." Yet he made that no reason for wasting his life in ease and idleness. Nor though, as appears from the Scripture narrative, he employed

overseers—men, no doubt, of character and integrity—did he consider it right to commit his business entirely into their hands. Here is a lesson for us.

In the first place, such irresponsibility is not good for servants. It places them in circumstances of temptation to act dishonestly; and yielding to temptations to which no man is justified in unnecessarily exposing others, many a good servant has had his ruin to lay at the door of a too easy and confiding master. Neither is it, in the second place, for the master's interests. *The eye of the master maketh a fat horse,* says an English proverb. *The farmer ploughs best with his feet,* says a Scotch one, his success turning on the attention he personally gives to the superintendence of his servants and the different interests of his farm. Boaz in the field among his reapers, or at the winnowing season foregoing the luxury of a bed to sleep at the back of a heap of corn, that, losing no time in traveling between his house and the distant threshing-floor, he might resume his work by the break of day, is an example of these old, wise adages; and how, pattern to others as well as farmers, a Christian should be—as the apostle says, and Jesus was—"not slothful in business," while "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Religion, sanctifying the secularities of life, does not teach us to neglect our business, but, on the contrary, to attend to it, making it as much our duty to repair to our farm or shop or counting-house, during the week, as, turning our back on them and dismissing their cares from our minds, we repair to church on the Lord's day.

The hand of the diligent, says the wise man, maketh rich. It does more: Boaz's industry probably contributed as much to his moral safety as to his material wealth. Neither in the inspired Bible nor elsewhere is there a more important practical truth than that expressed by the epigrammatic saying, *The devil tempts every man, but an idle man tempts the devil;* and thus it is best for men themselves—and for others also—when their circumstances impose on them a life of constant industry. Those engaged in

Boaz's pursuits form no exception to that adage, as was remarkably illustrated by the state of a country parish with which I was once acquainted. Many of its farms were held on life-leases and at very low rents, but the rest were let at prices which required their tenants to be industrious and economical. And so inferior in point of culture was the first class to the second that a stranger could have told which was which. Nor were the advantages of a condition which neither permits nor fosters idleness less visible in the character of the farmers than in the condition of the farms. With exceptions, of course, on both sides, those who could not meet term-day without being diligent in business were respectable in character, men of sober habits, wealthy and well to do; while not a few of the others became bankrupts, some living as much bankrupt in character as they died insolvent in circumstances. The bird that ceases to use its wings does not hang in mid-air, but drops like a stone to the ground; and by a law almost as certain, he sinks into evil habits whose time and faculties are not engaged on innocent and good employments. So much is this the case that, though periods of relaxation are desirable, there is danger in unduly prolonging them. "There are few, indeed," says Addison in the *Spectator*, "who know how to be idle and innocent: every diversion they take is at the expense of some one virtue or another, and their very first step out of business is into vice or folly." The purest water left to stagnate grows putrid, and the finest soil thrown into fallow soon throws up a crop of weeds. Had David, as in other days, followed his army to the battle-field, he had periled his life, but saved his character, escaping a temptation that owed perhaps more than half its power to the luxurious ease and idleness of a palace. Idleness is the mother of mischief, and who would keep their hands from doing wrong must employ them in doing good.

But this can only be done to the advantage of others as well as of ourselves by imitating the diligence of Boaz. "Slothful in business," he had not been in circumstances to be generous as

well as just. I have had much to do with begging of a kind, and have often observed that those were most distinguished for their munificence in charities who were most distinguished for their diligence in business. It gives the ability to bless others; and in that a good man will find ample reasons for managing his affairs with diligence and discretion, making it a matter not of choice, but of conscience. If we do not need money, others do. Many good and noble causes, like Ruth, require assistance; nor can any but those who are careful of their affairs afford to deal with them as Boaz with the widow, whom he generously invited to the bounties of his table—besides, with such a delicate regard to her feelings as reflected the highest credit on his own, whispering to his servants, "Let her glean among the sheaves, and let fall some handfuls on purpose for her."

Here is a pattern to copy, and a noble incentive to diligence in business—one which, though we may take a long step from the case of this honorable man to that of a thief, Paul employed, saying, "Let him who stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." For this end, men who could afford to retire from business have continued in it. Instead of seeking rest in the evening of life, they have labored on to its close; they have denied themselves for Him who denied himself for them; and that they might have to give to such as lacked, toiled on till the oar dropped from their weary hands. Far more than the life of the hermit who retires to cloister or mossy cell that he may pass the long day in solitude and alone with God, or that of one who occupies his whole time with religious speculations or the ordinary duties of devotion, is his a religious life who for such an object holds his post to the last, continuing diligent in business that he may have wherewithal to glorify God, assist the cause of the Redeemer and bless humanity—that he may be a husband of the widow and a father of the fatherless—that he may reclaim the lapsed and raise the fallen, and whether

they be the godless at home or the heathen abroad, save such as are ready to perish.

## HIS COURTEOUSNESS.

"Be ye courteous" is a duty which Paul—himself a fine example of it—enjoins on Christians. He who began his defence before Agrippa in this graceful fashion: "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews; especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently"—was no rude, coarse, vulgar man. His was courtesy to a superior; but a still finer ornament of manners, and of religion also, is courtesy to inferiors. And what a fine example of that is Boaz! It is with no cold looks, nor distant air, nor rough speech, nor haughty bearing, making his reapers painfully sensible of their inferiority—that they are servants and he their master—Boaz enters the harvest-field. "The master!" spoken by one who has espied him approaching—words that strike with dread the noisy urchins of a school—neither turns their mirth into silence nor makes them start to reluctant labors. Benevolence beams forth in his looks; and as the children who have attended their mothers to the field, won of old by his gifts and ready smile, run to meet him, he approaches with kindness on his lips. These are not sealed in cold silence, or opened but to find fault with his servants and address them roughly. "The Lord be with you!" is his salutation. They, dropping work, face round, sickles in hand, health in their ruddy cheeks and the sweat of honest labor on their brows, to welcome their master, and, his inferiors in rank, but his equals in pious courtesy, to reply, "The Lord bless thee!" More beautiful than the morning, with its dews sparkling like diamonds on the grass, and its golden beams tipping the surrounding hills of Bethlehem, these morning salutations between master and servants! Loving him, they esteemed

his interests their own. Would that employers and employés everywhere would take Boaz and his workmen as a pattern!

These beautiful expressions, as might be inferred from the words of the one hundred and twenty-ninth Psalm—"Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom; neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord"—may possibly have grown into a custom. Be it so. It was a very good custom. It had its root in the kindly relations that subsisted in these happy days between masters and servants, and the lack of which in ours breeds the jealousies that ever and anon break out in the unhappy strikes that entail such pecuniary losses on the employers, and such bitter sufferings on the families of the employed. Whatever may have been the case with others, Boaz's courtesy was more than a form of speech—that French politeness, so often like the *French polish* which imparts to mean timber the lustre of fine-grained woods. His conduct corresponded with his speech. Observe the eye of compassion he cast on Ruth; his kindness to the lonely stranger; the delicacy with which he sought to save her feelings while he relieved her poverty; the respect he showed to her misfortunes and her generous attachment to Naomi. He paid as much honor to the virtues and feelings of this poor gleaner as if she had been the finest lady in the land. Behold true courteousness!

This grace is a great set-off to piety. As such it should be assiduously cultivated by all who desire to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," religion, associated with a kind and courteous manner, being, to use Solomon's figure, like "apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Nor is there any reason, as the case of Boaz proves, why courteousness should be foreign to a country life, or rural scenes should breed rude manners. No doubt those who reside in towns, being brought in frequent contact with others, acquire a

polish more readily than country people, even as the stones on the sea-beach become rounded and smooth by the tides that roll them against each other. Allowance is to be made for this and other disadvantages which belong to country life. For candor requires us, in judging others, to take into account the drawbacks of their position—that every profession has its own peculiar temptations, and that censorious people will find it easier to condemn the faults of others than they would, were they in their circumstances, to avoid them. The cultivator, like the lord of the soil, seldom meets his superiors, and even his equals much less frequently than the citizen who, on crowded 'change and busy streets, comes in daily contact with many of talents, acquirements and position as good as his own. Walking his farm as a little kingdom, as the captain of a man-of-war his quarter-deck, and surrounded only by servants and inferiors, the circumstances of a farmer are not the most conducive to the acquisition of very courteous manners. Yet what he, as well as all other masters, may and should be, is seen in Boaz. A farmer, he was in the old, true sense of the word every inch a *gentleman:* pious, yet of polished manners; wealthy, yet gracious to the poor, and esteeming virtue above rank or riches; with dependents, yet treating the humblest of them with respectful courtesy; one in whom were beautifully blended the politeness of a court and the simple virtues of a country life.

A good practical lesson may be learned from the way in which this man bore himself toward his inferiors. It is by no means uncommon to hear servants, the peasantry and the common people blamed for their rude and vulgar manners. But they who censure what I do not altogether deny, far less commend, would do well to remember that there were more servants courteous as those of Boaz, were there more masters like him. Why are the lower classes not respectful to the superior? May it not be, and is it not true to a large extent, that the latter are not respectful to them? *Like begets like*, they say; and of that, so

far as courteousness is concerned, France and other countries of Europe furnish remarkable illustrations. One of their pleasant features is the respectful manner which the upper classes show to the humbler, with which a master addresses his own servant. The result is that the lower catch the manners of the upper classes, and are not rude, because they are not rudely treated. Men are like mirrors—they reflect the features of those that look at them.

We sometimes plume ourselves on our superiority to our neighbors in morals and religion. But why should not religion, in begetting kind and courteous manners, do as much, and more, for us than nature or fashion does for them? What rude and unmannerly language is at times addressed to servants! How little do many scruple to wound the feelings of their inferiors!—a vulgar and cowardly as well as an unchristian thing. They cannot return the blow; and it is like striking a man when he is down. Courteousness lies in a due regard to the feelings of others, and is a Christian duty. Paul enforced it by his precepts and illustrated it by his example. The whole tone and tenor of the Bible teaches us to be gentle; to be courteous as well as kind; to esteem men of low degree; to be kindly affectioned one toward another; and so to bear ourselves to our inferiors as to make them forget, rather than remember, their inferiority. The followers of Jesus are to be humble, not haughty—"clothed with humility," says the apostle—a robe, next to the righteousness which, covering all our sins, was woven on Calvary and dyed white in the blood of Christ, the fairest man can wear.

## HIS PIETY.

"The Lord be with you!"—his address to the reapers on entering the harvest-field—has the ring of sterling metal. What a contrast Boaz offers to farmers we have known, by whose lips God's name was frequently profaned but never honored, their servants, like their dogs and horses, being often cursed, but never

once blessed! And in accordance with the apophthegm, *Like master like man*, what shocking oaths have we heard, volleying as it were out of the mouth of hell, from the lips of coarse, animal, sensual farm-servants!

Boaz almost never opens his mouth but pearls drop out. His speech breathes forth pious utterances. All his conversation is seasoned with grace; and though the result of a divine change of heart, how natural his religion seems!—not like a gala-dress assumed for the occasion—not like gum-flowers worn for ornament, but such as spring living from the sward—not like an artificial perfume that imparts a passing odor to a thing that is dead, but the odors exhaled by roses or lilies bathed in the dews of heaven. One who could say, "I have set the Lord always before me." God is in all the good man's thoughts, and his holy name as often in his mouth to be honored as it is in others to be profaned. Though it may have been a common custom to bless the harvest and its reapers, he did it from his heart; nor were they words of course or custom he spoke when, bending on Ruth an eye of mingled pity and admiration, he said, "It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father, and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord remember thy work; and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Nor was it only in the language of piety that his piety expressed itself. It did not evaporate in words. We have heard him speak—see how he acts! One night sleeping by a heap of corn, alone, as he supposed, he wakes to find a woman lying at his feet. Starting up amazed, he cries, "Who art thou?"—a question which, no doubt expecting, she answers, saying, "I am Ruth;" adding, "Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman." *Evil to him that evil thinks.*

In this speech no immodesty stains the lips of Ruth, or casts the breath of suspicion on her character. Every country has customs and modes of expression peculiar to itself; and this which she employed was that followed by the Jewish women, when, in circumstances akin to hers, they claimed marriage of their nearest kinsman—the rights, in fact, of the living and the dead.

The marriage that resulted from this strange, short courtship presents another phase of the simple manners of these early days. While Roman Catholics, though advocating celibacy, exalt marriage into a sacrament, and others, who do not go that length, regard it as an ordinance where the hand of priest or presbyter is required to tie the knot, Boaz and Ruth went about forming this connection after the simplest fashion. The morning succeeding their interview he seats himself at the city gate. The man who was a degree more nearly related to Ruth than he approaches to pass out. His steps are suddenly arrested. "Ho! Such-an-one," cries Boaz; "turn aside and sit down here!" When he had done so, with ten of the elders of the city as witnesses and judges in the cause, Boaz relates the matter in hand; and as this man had at law a prior claim to Ruth's hand, he offers her in marriage to him. He declines to avail himself of his rights, and thus leaves the way clear for Boaz. He himself now claims her, and she consents. The elders with the people being taken to witness that they become man and wife with their free, mutual, honest consent, they are married. That constitutes the marriage. However proper may be our custom of accompanying marriage with religious services, there was on that occasion no such ceremony—nothing more than the blessing, not of any ecclesiastic, but of the elders and people, who say, "The Lord make the woman who is to come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and do thou worthily in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem!"

This blessing on their nuptials was answered in a way none present perhaps ever dreamt of, events hanging on the marriage

that had been so lovingly yet simply entered on, which still direct the steps of travelers to its scene, and have made the city of Ruth and Boaz famous in the annals of time and in the everlasting memories of eternity. It was here that David, Ruth's great-grandson, tended his father's sheep. The hills around heard the first feeble notes of the harp that banished the evil spirit from the breast of Saul, and has charmed the Church of God, through successive ages, with its inspired and sacred melodies. These hills saw the brave boy encounter both the lion and the bear, and as he plucked the prey from their bloody jaws win victories that were his confidence when, accepting the challenge of the giant, he said, "The Lord that delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." But Ruth was the ancestress, and Bethlehem the birthplace, of a greater than David. There the Son of God drew his first breath; there the Sun of righteousness arose on a benighted world with healing in his wings; there the fountain of salvation, the waters of which, if a man drink, he shall never thirst more, sprung up sparkling into the light of day. It was in the city where Ruth was married the Saviour of the world was born; it was among these hills the shepherds watched their flocks by night; it was over the very fields trodden by this gleaner's feet the glory of the Lord shone forth, and the midnight sky suddenly became filled with angels, and mortal ears heard those immortals sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"

# XVI.

## SAMUEL.

SAMUEL was the last judge, the first of the regular succession of prophets and the founder of the monarchy. So important a position did he hold in Jewish history as to have given his name to the sacred book, now divided into two, which covers the whole period of the first establishment of the kingdom, corresponding to the manner in which the name of Moses has been assigned to the sacred book, now divided into five, which covers the period of the foundation of the Jewish Church itself. In fact, but one character of equal magnitude had arisen since the death of the great lawgiver.

Samuel was the son of Elkanah, a Levite of Mount Ephraim, and Hannah or Anna. His father is one of the few private citizens in whose household we find polygamy. It may possibly have arisen from the irregularity of the period. All that appears with certainty of his birthplace is that it was in the hills of Ephraim. At the foot of the hill was a well; on the brow of its two summits was the city. It never lost its hold on Samuel, who in later life made it his fixed abode.

It is on the mother of Samuel that our chief attention is fixed in the account of his birth. She is described as a woman of a high religious mission. Almost a Nazarite by practice, and a prophetess in her gifts, she sought from God the gift of a child for which she longed with the passionate devotion of silent prayer, of which there is no other example in the Old Testament, and

when the son was granted, the name which he bore, and thus first introduced into the world, expressed her sense of the urgency of her entreaty—Samuel, "the asked or heard of God."

Living in the great age of vows, she had before his birth dedicated him to the office of a Nazarite. As soon as he was weaned, she herself with her husband brought him to the tabernacle of Shiloh, where she had received the first intimation of his birth, and there solemnly consecrated him. From this time the child is shut up in the tabernacle. The priests furnished him with a sacred garment—an ephod—made, like their own, of white linen, though of inferior quality, and his mother every year, apparently at the only time of their meeting, gave him a little mantle reaching down to his feet, such as was worn only by high personages or women over the other dress, and such as he retained as his badge till the latest times of his life. He seems to have slept within the holiest place, and his special duty was to put out the sacred candlestick and to open the doors at sunrise.

In this way his childhood was passed. It was whilst thus sleeping in the tabernacle that he received his first prophetic call. The stillness of the night, the sudden voice, the childlike misconception, the venerable Eli, the contrast between the terrible doom and the gentle creature who was to announce it, give to this portion of the narrative a universal interest. It is this side of Samuel's career that has been so well caught in the well-known picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

From this moment the prophetic character of Samuel was established. His words were treasured up, and Shiloh became the resort of those who came to hear him. 1 Sam. iii. 19–21. In the overthrow of the sanctuary, which followed shortly on this vision, we hear not what became of Samuel. He next appears, probably twenty years afterward, suddenly amongst the people, warning them against their idolatrous practices. He convened an assembly at Mizpeh, and there, with a symbolical rite, expressive partly of deep humiliation, partly of the libations of a treaty, they poured

water on the ground, they fasted, and they entreated Samuel to raise the piercing cry for which he was known in supplication to God for them. It was at the moment he was offering up a sacrifice and sustaining this loud cry that the Philistines' host suddenly burst upon them. A violent thunderstorm, and (according to Josephus) an earthquake, came to the timely assistance of Israel. The Philistines fled, and exactly at the spot where, twenty years before, they had obtained their great victory, they were totally routed. A stone was set up, which long remained as a memorial of Samuel's triumph, and gave to the place its name of Eben-ezer ("the stone of help"), which has thence passed into Christian phraseology. The old Canaanites, whom the Philistines had dispossessed in the outskirts of the Judæan hills, seemed to have helped in the battle, and a large portion of territory was recovered. This was Samuel's first, and, as far we know, his only, military achievement. But as in the case of the earlier chiefs who bore that name, it was apparently this which raised him to the office of "judge." He visited, in discharge of his duties as ruler, the three chief sanctuaries on the west of Jordan —Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh. 1 Sam. vii. 16. His own residence was still his native city Ramah, which he further consecrated by an altar. Here he married, and two sons grew up to repeat under his eyes the same perversion of high office that he had himself witnessed in his childhood, in the case of the two sons of Eli. One was Abiah, the other Joel. In his old age, according to the quasi-hereditary principle already adopted by previous judges, he shared his power with them, and they exercised their functions at the southern frontier in Beersheba.

Down to this point in Samuel's life, there is but little to distinguish his career from that of his predecessors. Like many characters in later days, had he died in youth, his fame would hardly have been greater than that of Gideon or Samson. He was a judge, a Nazarite, a warrior, and, to a certain point, a prophet.

But his peculiar position in the sacred narrative turns on the events which follow. He was the inaugurator of the transition from what is commonly called the theocracy to the monarchy. The misdemeanor of his own sons, in receiving bribes and in extorting exorbitant interest on loans (1 Sam. viii. 3, 4), precipitated the catastrophe which had been long preparing. The people demanded a king. Josephus describes the shock to Samuel's mind, "because of his inborn sense of justice, because of his hatred of kings, as so far inferior to the aristocratic form of government, which conferred a godlike character on those who lived under it." For the whole night he lay fasting and sleepless, in the perplexity of doubt and difficulty. In the vision of that night, as recorded by the sacred historian, is given the dark side of the new institution, on which Samuel dwells on the following day. 1 Sam. viii. 9–18. This presents his reluctance to receive the new order of things. The whole narrative of the reception and consecration of Saul gives his acquiescence in it.

The final conflict of feeling and surrender of his office is given in the last assembly over which he presided, and in his subsequent relations with Saul. The assembly was held at Gilgal, immediately after the victory over the Ammonites. The monarchy was a second time solemnly inaugurated. "All the men of Israel rejoiced greatly." Then takes place Samuel's farewell address. By this time the long flowing locks on which no razor had ever passed were white with age. 1 Sam. xii. 2. He appeals to their knowledge of his integrity. Whatever might have been the lawless habits of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, or of his own sons—he had kept aloof from all. No ox or ass had he taken from their stalls—no bribe to obtain his judgment—not even a sandal. It is this appeal and the response of the people that has made Grotius call him the Jewish Aristides. He then sums up the new situation in which they have placed themselves; and although "the wickedness of asking a king" is still strongly insisted on, and the unusual portent of a thunder-storm in May or

June, in answer to Samuel's prayer, is urged as a sign of divine displeasure (1 Sam. xii. 16–19), the general tone of the condemnation is much softened from that which was pronounced on the first intimation of the change. The first king is repeatedly acknowledged as "the Messiah" or "anointed of the Lord;" the future prosperity of the nation is declared to depend on their use or misuse of the new constitution, and Samuel retires with expressions of good will and hope: "I will teach you the good and the right way, . . . only fear the Lord."

It is the most signal example afforded in the Old Testament of a great character reconciling himself to a changed order of things, and of the divine sanction resting on his acquiescence.

His subsequent relations with Saul are of the same mixed kind. The two institutions which they respectively represented ran on side by side. Samuel was still judge. He judged "Israel all the days of his life" (1 Sam. vii. 15), and from time to time came across the king's path. But these interventions were chiefly in another capacity, which this is the place to unfold.

Samuel is called emphatically "the prophet." Acts iii. 24; xiii. 20. To a certain extent this was in consequence of the gift which he shared in common with others of his time. He was especially known in his own age as "Samuel the seer." 1 Chron. ix. 22; xxvi. 28. "I am the seer," was his answer to those who asked, "Where is the seer?" "Where is the seer's house?" "Seer," the ancient name, was not yet superseded by "prophet." Of the three modes by which divine communications were then made—"by dreams, Urim and Thummim, and prophets"—the first was that by which the divine will was made known to Samuel. "The Lord uncovered his ear" to whisper into it in the stillness of the night the messages that were to be delivered. It is the first distinct intimation of the idea of "revelation" to a human being. He was consulted far and near on the small affairs of life; loaves of "bread" or "the fourth part of a shekel of silver" were paid for the answers. From this faculty, combined

with his office of ruler, an awful reverence grew up round him. No sacrificial feast was thought complete without his blessing. When he appeared suddenly elsewhere for the same purpose, the villagers "trembled" at his approach. A peculiar virtue was believed to reside in his intercessions. He was conspicuous in later times amongst those that "*call* upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. xcix. 6), and was placed with Moses as "standing"—for prayer, in a special sense—"before the Lord." Jer. xv. 1. It was the last consolation he left in his parting address that he would "pray to the Lord" for the people. There was something peculiar in the long-sustained cry or shout of supplication which seemed to draw down as by force the divine answer. 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9. All night long, in agitated moments, "he *cried* unto the Lord." But there are two other points which more especially placed him at the head of the prophetic order as it afterward appeared. The first is brought out in his relation with Saul, the second in his relation with David. He represents the independence of the moral law, of the divine will, as distinct from regal or sacerdotal enactments, which is so remarkable a characteristic of all the later prophets. He certainly was not a priest, and all the attempts to identify his opposition to Saul with a hierarchical interest are founded on a complete misconception of the facts of the case. From the time of the overthrow of Shiloh, he never appears in the remotest connection with the priestly order. Amongst all the places included in his personal or administrative visits, neither Shiloh nor Nob nor Gibeon, the seats of the sacerdotal caste, are ever mentioned. When he counsels Saul, it is not as the priest, but as the prophet; when he sacrifices or blesses the sacrifice, it is not as the priest, but either as an individual Israelite of eminence, or as a ruler, like Saul himself. Saul's sin in both cases where he came into collision with Samuel was not of intruding into sacerdotal functions, but of disobedience to the prophetic voice. The first was that of not waiting for Samuel's arrival, according to the order given by Samuel at his original

meeting at Ramah (1 Sam. x. 8; xiii. 8); the second was that of not carrying out the stern prophetical injunction for the destruction of the Amalekites. When, on that occasion, the aged prophet called their captive prince before him, and with his own hands hacked him from limb to limb, in retribution for the desolation he had brought into the homes of Israel, and thus offered up his mangled remains almost as a human sacrifice ("before the Lord in Gilgal"), we see the representative of the older part of the Jewish history. But it is the true prophetic utterance, such as breathes through the psalmists and prophets, when he says to Saul, in words which, from their poetical form, must have become fixed in the national memory, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

The parting was not one of rivals, but of dear though divided friends. The king throws himself on the prophet with all his force; not without a vehement effort the prophet tears himself away. The long mantle by which he was always known is rent in the struggle, and, like Ahijah after him, Samuel saw in this the omen of the coming rent in the monarchy. They parted, each to his house, to meet no more. But a long shadow of grief fell over the prophet. "Samuel mourned for Saul." "It grieved Samuel for Saul." "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?"

The next point is that he is the first of a regular succession of prophets. "All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after." Acts iii. 24. The connection of the continuity of the office with Samuel appears to be direct. It is in his lifetime, long after he had been "established as a prophet," that we hear of the companies of disciples called in the Old Testament "the sons of the prophets."

All the peculiarities of their education are implied or expressed —the sacred dance, the sacred music, the solemn procession. At the head of this congregation, or "church, as it were, within a church," Samuel is expressly described as "standing appointed over them." Their chief residence at this time was at Samuel's

own abode (Ramah), where they lived in habitations apparently of a rustic kind, like the leafy huts which Elisha's disciples afterward occupied by the Jordan.

In those schools, and learning to cultivate the prophetic gifts, were some whom we know for certain, others whom we may almost certainly conjecture, to have been so trained or influenced. One was Saul. Twice at least he is described as having been in the company of Samuel's disciples, and as having caught from them the prophetic fervor to such a degree as to have "prophesied among them," and on one occasion to have thrown off his clothes, and to have passed the night in a state of prophetic trance; and even in his palace prophesying mingled with his madness on ordinary occasions. 1 Sam. xviii, 10. Another was David. The first acquaintance of Samuel with David was when he privately anointed him at the house of Jesse. But the connection thus begun with the shepherd boy must have been continued afterward. David at first fled to "Naioth in Ramah" as to his second home, and the gifts of music, of song and of prophecy, here developed on so large a scale, were exactly such as we find in the notices of those who looked up to Samuel as their father. It is, further, hardly possible to escape the conclusion that David there first met his fast friends and companions in after life, prophets like himself—Gad and Nathan.

It is needless to enlarge on the importance with which these incidents invest the appearance of Samuel. He there becomes the spiritual father of the psalmist king. He is also the founder of the first regular institutions of religious instruction and communities for the purpose of education. The schools of Greece were not yet in existence. From these Jewish institutions were developed, by a natural order, the universities of Christendom; and it may be further added that with this view the whole life of Samuel is in accordance. He is the prophet—the only prophet till the time of Isaiah—of whom we know that he was so from his earliest years. It is this continuity of his own life and character

that makes him so fit an instrument for conducting his nation through so great a change. The death of Samuel is described as taking place in the year of the close of David's wanderings. It is said with peculiar emphasis, as if to mark the loss, that "*all* the Israelites"—all, with a universality never specified before—"were gathered together" from all parts of this hitherto divided country, and "lamented him" and "buried him," not in any consecrated place, but within his own house, thus in a manner consecrated by being turned into his tomb.



# XVII.

## SAUL.

"IS Saul also among the prophets?" This question, which became proverbial, is referred in the Book of Samuel to two different incidents in the life of Saul. He is said to have met a troop of prophets before he was chosen king, when he was known only as the son of Kish the Benjamite, and to have been suddenly seized with their spirit. He is said in the latter and degenerate period of his reign, when he was persecuting David, to have gone down to Ramah in search of his son-in-law, "and the Spirit of God came on him, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah." It is the fashion of our times to suppose that these must be two versions of the same fact preserved by different chroniclers and brought together by some careless compiler. I venture to think that that solution of the difficulty is not a necessary one, not even the most probable one. I believe that there occur in most of our lives events, often separated by many years, which look as if one was the repetition of the other. I fancy that those who reflect may discover in such recurring incidents very striking, often very sad, memorials of what they have been and of what they are; very awful witnesses of their own identity, amidst all the changes that have befallen them and the more terrible changes that have taken place within them. As it sometimes assists a man's meditations to walk amongst the same trees under the shade of which he walked, or to watch the sea from the same point from which

he watched it twenty or thirty years before, so these startling revivals of past experiences, these relapses into states of feeling that have been unknown for a long season, must be more powerful revelations to him respecting the unity of the past and present in his inward history. And if so, a faithful biographer will be careful to record such pairs of events. He will find them especially useful in making the life of his hero intelligible. They will give his reader, though he may not know why, a sense that he is meeting with an actual man, not merely with a man in a book.

We shall understand better how this observation applies to Saul's history if we trace it as it is delivered in the Bible. There is a way of presenting what is called the *rationale* of the Bible narratives, stripping them of their mystical and theological adjuncts, which I do not profess to follow. If I did, I should have to tell you that Saul was chosen by the people of Israel because he was the tallest and strongest man among them; that while the novelty of royalty lasted he retained his popularity; that he lost it partly through the influence of the prophet Samuel, who feared that he was breaking loose from his influence and taking a course of his own, and who therefore represented him as having violated some of the duties which belonged to a theocratic sovereign; that a young and brilliant rival put forward by this venerated teacher supplanted him in the affection of his people, and even of his own family; that jealousy at the admiration which was excited by this adventurer, and fear that he would actually obtain the kingdom, overthrew his reason; that he fell into wild, arbitrary and desperate courses, provoked a war with the Philistines and died in battle. It seems to some that the records of our book become vastly more real when they are put into this modern dress and made to look as if they had been taken out of a journal of the day. And I do not deny that such paraphrases may be an escape from the dryness and formality with which Scripture narratives are sometimes offered to us, as if they referred to beings of a different nature from our own—as if, because they speak of God,

they have nothing to do with man. But I venture to doubt whether the phraseology of newspapers is, after all, the most real, the most human, the most historical—whether the conventional formulas which describe so readily and so satisfactorily to our minds the causes that produce popular or royal follies or perversities do convey any distinct or living impressions to us—whether we must not render the modern dialect back into the ancient one from which we have translated it before we can hope honestly to understand it, or to bring what passes among ourselves into comparison or correspondence with the history that is delivered in it.

For instance, it may be very true and very needful to remember that the height of Saul's stature and the comeliness of his person had much to do with his being made the first king of Israel. But if, instead of saying that the people elected him for this reason, we follow the Scripture narrative strictly, and say that he, being a member of an insignificant family in the smallest tribe of Israel, and therefore being most unlikely to be selected by the people, and having no dream of any such honor for himself, was marked out by God as the person on whom he would bestow it, I believe we shall obtain a light, not upon this fact only, but upon a multitude that have occurred in the history of the world, which stand in great need of explanation, and which are certainly not explained by the commonplaces of ordinary narrators, even if they call themselves philosophical. In a number of cases (the annals of every nation and of almost every age supply some) an inconceivably trifling incident—as trifling as that of Saul going out in search of his father's asses—has brought forth the man whom a people feel to be, not selected by them, but given to them, whom they adopt and embrace, they know not why, and who, whether or not he is able to guide and govern them, proves to be a faithful representative of their own state of mind, the very type and embodiment of that character and those habits of mind which they are themselves exhibiting. This is the fact. It has

nothing to do with theories about who are or ought to be the choosers of a ruler—with the maxims which guide or should guide their choice of him. He is there; he comes to them. Whether you like it or not, you must refer—you do refer—his appearance to some invisible agency. You may call that agency chance, if you like. If you know no other name, that is, of course, the one which you will resort to. If you are content with it, there is no more to be said. But mankind has not been content with it. Men have said there must be an order in these events apparently so fortuitous. They have insisted upon knowing something about that order and who directs it. If now in this nineteenth century—this century of science—you choose to say there is *no* order in all this, your language at all events sounds as if you were retrograding, not progressing—as if you were falling back upon the crudest notions of barbarism. But if not, you may listen to the way in which the Scripture accounts for one of these instances, and in that one for all, whensoever and wheresoever they take place. He, it says, who governed the Israelites —who was their real King—had taught his judge and prophet that he was not to resist the craving of the people—though it was a self-willed, idolatrous, mischievous craving—to have a ruler of their armies who should make them like the nations round about; that he was to yield to them and let them have their way. And now, it is said, God appointed the king who would answer to the desires of this people, who was the kind of man that they had conceived of, cast in their own mould, distinguished from them chiefly by mere outward superiority, the very person who would cause them to experience that which it was absolutely necessary for them to experience. Scripture says that Samuel the prophet was taught to perceive that this was the man whom God had chosen for them, that he anointed him, and that he became their king accordingly.

We are not told any remarkable points in the character or early discipline of the man who was appointed to this office;

there were probably none to tell. But as a man not distinguished from his fellows by any peculiar gifts—merely a specimen of the ordinary, the most ordinary, human material—may nevertheless be brought most livingly before us, we may be compelled to feel that he is an individual man, one of ourselves, and simply as such to care for him.

We must read the story of Saul's journey in search of the asses; of his servant's advice to him about the prophet, "the honorable man, the man of God," whose words would surely come to pass, and who might tell them the way they should go; of the maidens coming down the hill to draw water, who told him how the people were gone up to the high place to a sacrifice, and how the seer would presently come to bless it; of the first meeting of the Benjamite with the holy man, and of the wonder with which he heard that a portion of the sacrifice was set apart for him, and that the desire of Israel was upon him and upon his father's house,—we must read this story oftentimes in order to understand how a few lines may bring a whole picture before us, and make us acquainted with what is passing in a region into which a mere picture cannot lead us. The historian does not talk about the subjects of his narrative, but shows them to us. All is, in the strictest sense of the word, dramatical. The men are made known to us in their doings, and we feel that there is a clear light falling upon them from above by which we are enabled to see them.

Then comes in that passage in the story of Saul to which I alluded before. It is thus foretold to him by Samuel: "When thou art departed from me to-day, thou shalt then find two men by Rachel's sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah. Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. And they will salute thee and give thee two loaves of bread,

which thou shalt receive at their hand. After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines. And it shall come to pass when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy. And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." 1 Sam. x. 2–6.

There are moments—you may all have noticed them—in the mind of the dullest, most prosaic man, when unknown springs seem to be opened in him—when either some new and powerful affection, or, quite as often, the sense of a vocation, fills him with thoughts and causes him to utter words which are quite alien from his ordinary habits, and yet which you are sure he cannot have been taught by any other person, they have in them such a pledge and savor of originality. You say involuntarily, "He seemed for the moment quite inspired; he became another man." Are you not also half inclined to say, "Now, for the first time, *the* man has come forth. Hitherto a cold, barren nature, or a formal education, has choked up the life that was in him; now it is bursting through artificial dams, through mud barriers. Now we can see what is in him"? Soon perhaps he sinks back into what he was before. There are no more traces of that splendor than of a sunset after the shades of night have closed in; but it has been; it has brought something to light which you could never have dreamed of but for that momentary appearance; you feel as if you had a right to think of the man, to measure his capacity, by that which spoke forth in him at that instant more than by all the rest of his existence.

Now, it is a fact of this kind which this record discloses to us, only it is a fact not separated from the law and principle of it, but explaining that law and principle to us. "God gave him another heart; the Spirit of God came upon him"—these are the words which tell us what that prophetic impulse denoted. Then

Saul became conscious of thoughts and desires altogether new and wonderful. The same earth and skies were about him, but he himself was different. He looked upon all things with different eyes. And this was because the Spirit of God had apprehended him. He could not doubt that God was speaking to him down in that region which the vulture's eye had not seen; a transmuting, life-giving power had penetrated there; it had claimed his obedience, and he had yielded to it. He could not but connect this power with the office to which he had been so suddenly called. How could he be a king if he were still the same feeble, paltry creature that he had been? Did he not need some mighty influence to fit him for this work? And was it strange that He who chose him for that work should enable him to fulfill it? However unwonted, then, might be the thoughts which stirred in him and the words which he poured forth, they could not have come from some irregular, tumultuous excitement; they must have proceeded from the very spirit of calmness and order. Saul was among the prophets precisely because he confessed the presence of such a spirit of calmness and order. For this was the faith of the prophets, this was the design of their appointment, to be witnesses of what they said and what they did and what they were—that men, whether they be kings or subjects, are not to be the sport of outward accidents and chance impulses, but to act habitually as the servants and scholars of a divine Master, who can show them the path in which they are to go, can give them continual inward illumination, can raise them to a point from which they may overlook the world around and interpret the course of it.

This was the preparation and discipline of a king, in all essentials the discipline and preparation which every ruler requires and must undergo who is to rule a people righteously and wisely, not following the bent of his own inclinations, not swayed by some bias from without, but being under the dominion of an invisible and righteous will, obeying that he may exercise dominion

over his fellow-men. What the Scripture teaches us in the next part of the story is that Saul did not continue the subject of this government, and therefore that he became by degrees feeble, reckless and tyrannical. The steps of the *facilis descensus* are carefully noted.

Saul is no monster who has won power by false means, and then plunges at once into a reckless abuse of it—no apostate who casts off the belief in God and sets up some Ammonite or Phœnician idol. He merely forgets the Lord and teacher who had imparted to him that new life and inspiration; he merely fails to remember that he is under a law and that he has a vocation. Samuel, according to modern expositors of the story, was angry because he felt that he was losing his own influence over the mind of the king. No; he was angry because the king was so much the slave of his influence, or of any influence that was exerted over him for the moment—because he was losing the sense of responsibility to One higher than a prophet—to One who had appointed him to rule, not in his own right, but as the minister and executor of the divine righteousness. It was a light transgression, you will say, that Saul made haste to perform a sacrifice without waiting for the person who was appointed by the law to perform it. Perhaps you may think it was a sign of the king's devotion; how could he neglect a religious duty for the sake of a formality? But in that indifference to law lay the seeds of arbitrary government, the pretensions of an autocrat. In that eagerness to do a religious service lay the seeds of the superstition which God by his covenant and statutes was undermining, since all superstition lies in the neglect of the truth which Samuel proclaimed, that obedience is better than the fat of rams, that sacrifices are not to buy God's good will, but are acts of submission to it. It may seem to some as if Samuel was enjoining a very rigorous course when he complained of Saul for sparing Agag the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the flocks and herds. But a king who let his people rush upon the prey when

they were sent to punish an unrighteous nation, the crimes of which had reached a full measure, was forgetting the very functions of a Jewish sovereign, and was turning conquest into that which it was not to be—a gratification of covetousness, a means of aggrandizement. The king who heeded the voice of his army in such a matter showed that he was not their leader, but their tool and slave. The king who pretended to keep the booty for the purpose of offering sacrifice to the Lord his God, was evidently beginning to play the hypocrite—to make the service of God an excuse for acts of selfishness, and so to introduce all that is vilest in kingcraft as well as priestcraft. Samuel the prophet was not trying to keep alive the habits which these names express, that he might maintain the dignity of his own office. That office enjoined him to bear the most emphatical protest against them. He was bound to tell Saul that if he forgot that he was a servant, and fancied himself absolute, his true condition would be shown him, for that the kingdom would be rent from him and given to another.

The next passages of the story belong properly to the history of David, but the progress of Saul's fear and jealousy of the young man concerning whom the virgins of Israel sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain his tens of thousands," is a part of the present subject. There are many ways, no doubt, of describing how such a passion as this enters the soul and takes a direction toward a person who had once been loved, is baffled for a while, sometimes gives way to fits of returning affection, then absorbs the man completely, till it becomes an ungoverned frenzy, prompting the most extravagant and ferocious acts. But I think that one who is considering the subject in earnest, trying to turn it to account for himself and his fellow-men, will do well to pause before he abandons the language in which the Bible speaks of this awful mental process and takes up with any other. It tells us that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." This was before David had

awakened his fears, while *he* was still a shepherd boy, sent for to soothe him with his harp. The words therefore describe an earlier state of mind—one which the story we have considered already will make sufficiently clear to us. That calm spirit of trust and hope which had once come upon Saul had been resisted and grieved; he had forgotten that such a spirit had been given him to be his guide and counselor, his wisdom to understand God's commands, his strength to obey them. And now there had come an evil spirit from the Lord, an accusing conscience warning him of what he had been, throwing its dark shadow upon the present, making the future look dim and gloomy. All ghastly apparitions haunt a mind in this condition. It sees nothing as it is. It sees innumerable things which are not. Much physical disease probably attends the moral derangement. The palpable and monstrous distortions which arise out of it are such as friends naturally seek to cure by outward applications and diversions. The servants of Saul, who could not probe the seat of their master's disorder, suggested the wisest of all methods for removing its external symptoms. The music was more than a mere palliative. It brought back for the time the sense of a true order, a secret, inward harmony, an assurance that it is near every man and that he may enter into it. A wonderful message, no doubt, to a king or a common man, better than a great multitude of words—a continual prophecy that there is a Deliverer who can take the vulture from the heart and unbind the sufferer from the rock, but not (as many, I suppose, must bitterly know) the deliverer itself.

And therefore, at the next turn of the story, the evil spirit has become an evil spirit indeed. It is still called an evil spirit "from the Lord." For that which torments us, and does not suffer us to sink into the ease and security we long for, has surely a commission from God for our good, though it come with a thousand dark suggestions which cannot be from him, which are perpetual incitements to rebellion against him. But now this

spirit which was preying upon the man himself has found another object; it has become a gnawing suspicion and hatred against an innocent man—a feeling that he has some deep plot against the life of his king, and that all Saul's children are plotting with him. Surely this feeling of suspicion better explains to us than anything else the nature of the retribution which a man brings upon himself by tampering with evil thoughts and imaginations, by trifling with the loving power which is so close to him, and so ready to nourish him with wholesome and gracious food. Every one of us perhaps has had converse enough with this demon, has dallied enough with his dark hints, to know how true the Scripture portrait must be, even though, by God's great mercy, we may have been saved from catching the entire likeness of it. Awful as is the misery which the indulgence of this sin causes to others, yet the punishment which it inflicts upon the heart that is the seat of it, the madness which it produces there, is something more terrible still. We are surely warranted in hoping that in a multitude of cases it is a healing discipline—that the utter humiliation which it produces works out blessings, though they may never appear, though the soul may seem to sink and go out in utter bewilderment and desolation.

I have not tried to ascertain the point at which the moral guilt of Saul ends and his madness begins. The Bible does not hint at a settlement of that question. It belongs in this case, as in all cases, to Him who said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." It is enough for us to know, and to tremble as we know, that the loss of all capacity for discerning between right and wrong, a hopeless inversion of rule and order, a loss of all the kingly faculties which enable us to exercise an influence over others or ourselves, may be the rightful and natural result of indulging any one hateful passion, of forgetting the special work which God has committed to us, of acting as if we were our own masters and could do with-

out him. On the other hand, it is for the relief and comfort of our minds to believe—as we are taught to believe by all law-givers and moralists—that there are conditions of mind to which we must not and dare not impute moral delinquency; a still greater and deeper comfort to know that in these conditions, as well as in those where there is most of willful wrong, God may still be carrying on his own great and wonderful work of "bringing souls out of darkness and the shadow of death, of breaking their bonds asunder."

There are glimpses of light in the later life of Saul which we refer at once to this divine source, which it would be sinful to refer to any other. The love and loyalty of David in sparing his life were not unrewarded. They struck out sparks of love in him; they made it evident that there was something deeper and healthier beneath all his strangest distortions of mind. And that sacred inspiration which recalled the almost forgotten question, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" though it came mixed with a kind of wild insanity—though it was no longer the prophetical utterance of a calm, heaven-possessed soul—though it was like the sound of the wind through a broken and fallen building—yet proclaimed that God's Spirit, which bloweth where it listeth, had not left this building to be a mere possession for the birds of night.

Even in the last act which is recorded of Saul on the night before his death—his resorting to the witches whom he had himself forbidden—there is a strange and mad confusion between a real desire to know the mind of God and a feeling that to him it could only be declared through some evil agent. He has a longing to see the friend of his youth, the true counselor from whom he had severed himself. When the presence of the reprover and friend is felt, and his awful accents heard, Saul "fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel, and there was no strength in him."

A strange preparation for the fight on the coming day, when

"the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in Mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul, and upon his sons. And the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchishua, Saul's sons. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword and thrust me through therewith, lest the uncircumcised come and thrust me through and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not, for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, that same day together. And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. And the Philistines put Saul's armor in the house of Ashtaroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan." 1 Sam. xxxi. This was the end of Saul and of his kingdom.

He who was to be the restorer of this kingdom sang of Saul and Jonathan on the day when he heard of their fall, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." Was this an idle flattery, by one who knew it to be false, of a man whom flattery could please no longer? I believe it was nothing of the kind. David spoke what he felt at that moment, and he would not have wished to recall the words afterward. He had known a loveliness and pleasantness in the life of Saul which all its after discords could not make him forget. He had known a real man under the name. A false man had borne it too. The one was dead; the other was still alive in his memory and heart. Other questions, agitating, perplexing, almost maddening, he could leave to Him who only could resolve them. There were symbols of reconciliation in the deaths of

Saul and Jonathan. The father and son who had been often so unnaturally separated were united at last. David was privileged to think of them together, to let the tenderness of the one efface the hard treatment of the other; to feel that God had meant them to be one in heart and act, though the evil and dark spirit to which Saul had yielded himself tore them asunder.

Brethren, I believe it is not dangerous, but safe—not a homage to falsehood, but to truth—in our judgment of those who are departed, to follow David's example. We may dwell upon bright and hallowed moments of lives that have been darkened by many shadows, polluted by many sins; those moments may be welcomed as revelations to us of that which God intended his creatures to be; we may feel that there has been a loveliness in them which God gave them, and which their own evil could not take away. We may think of this loveliness as if it expressed the inner purpose of their existence; the rest may be for us as though it were not. As Nature, with her old mosses and her new spring foliage, hides the ruins which man has made, and gives to the fallen tower and broken cloister a beauty scarcely less than that which belonged to them in their prime, so human love may be at work too, "softening and concealing, and busy with her hand in healing," the rents which have been made in God's nobler temple, the habitation of his own Spirit. If it were lawful in the old time to cover with love and hope a multitude of transgressions, it cannot be less lawful now that the earth is overshadowed with a mercy that blotteth out iniquity and transgression and sin—when the blood of sprinkling has a mightier voice than that which cries for vengeance—when the atoning sacrifice reveals heights and lengths and depths and breadths of love in which we must rejoice to be lost.

But oh, brethren, if this be a lesson which it is lawful to take up and apply to our friends and brethren, it should come in another form, with another force, to ourselves. There has been

some moment—some one fleeting moment—in the life of every man, even the most thoughtless, when he has had dreams of better things—when he has heard the voices of the prophets coming with their harp and their tabret down the hill—when he has joined their company and has caught their strains. There may have been a time when it has been said of him, "What! is he too among the prophets? Has he found that life is real, and that it is not to go out in miserable efforts for self-advancement, or in more miserable self-indulgence; that it is to be consecrated to the service of God and man?" That hour, that moment, was *the* hour, *the* moment, of thy life, friend and brother. To *that*, God would raise and assimilate the whole of it. Oh, do not let the sluggish, turbid current of your ordinary days seem to you that which truly represents to you what you are, what you are able to be! No; the time when you made the holiest resolutions—when you struggled most with the powers of evil—when you said it should not be your master—when Love conquered you and freed you from other chains, that you might wear her chains, —*that, that* was the true index to the divine purpose concerning you—that tells you what the Spirit of God is every hour working in you that you may be. You may not be able to revive the feeling which you had then, but He who gave you the feeling, he is with you, is striving with you, that you may will and do of his good pleasure; only do not strive with him that he may leave you to yourself and to the power of evil.

But if you should have engaged in that mad struggle, and been, to your own ruin, a conqueror in it—if you should have succeeded in quenching that voice of love which you once heard speaking in your heart, and now you can hear nothing but hoarse and dissonant voices of evil omen—oh, yet be sure that the Spirit of God does not desert the work of his own hands—that he is still hovering about the habitation in which he desires to dwell. And if, when you meet with old friends from whom you have been long estranged, there should come back something of the

youthful impulse, some of those heart-yearnings and songs of hope which you poured forth then, though mixed with turbulence and confusion, and hardly to be distinguished from the ravings of madness, yet the question may be asked again, "Is he too among the prophets?" and God will answer that question as it was not answered before if you desire not the power of the prophets, but their obedience—not that you may speak inspired words, but that you may have the humble and contrite heart which he does not despise.

# XVIII.

## JONATHAN.

JONATHAN was the eldest son of King Saul. The name—"the gift of Jehovah," corresponding to Theodorus in Greek—seems to have been common at that period. He first appears some time after his father's accession. Of his own family we know nothing except the birth of one son, five years before his death. He was regarded in his father's lifetime as heir to the throne. Like Saul, he was a man of great strength and activity, of which the exploit at Michmash was a proof. He was also famous for the peculiar martial exercises in which his tribe excelled—archery and slinging. His bow was to him what the spear was to his father: "The *bow* of Jonathan turned not back." It was always about him. It is through his relation to David that he is chiefly known to us, probably as related by his descendants at David's court. But there is a background, not so clearly given, of his relation with his father. From the time that he first appears he is Saul's constant companion. He was always present at his father's meals. As Abner and David seem to have occupied the places afterward called the captaincies of "the host" and "of the guard," so he seems to have been (as Hushai afterward) "the friend." The whole story implies, without expressing, the deep attachment of the father and son. Jonathan can only go on his dangerous expedition (1 Sam. xiv. 1) by concealing it from Saul. Saul's vow is con-

firmed, and its tragic effect deepened, by his feeling for his son, "though it be Jonathan my son." "Tell me what thou hast done." Jonathan cannot bear to believe his father's enmity to David: "My father will do nothing great or small, but that he will show it to me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so." To him, if to any one, the wild frenzy of the king was amenable—"Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan." Their mutual affection was indeed interrupted by the growth of Saul's insanity. Twice the father would have sacrificed the son; once in consequence of his vow. 1 Sam. xiv. The second time, more deliberately, on the discovery of David's flight; and on this last occasion a momentary glimpse is given of some darker history. Were the phrases, "son of a perverse, rebellious woman," etc., mere frantic invectives? or was there something in the story of Ahinoam or Rizpah which we do not know? "In fierce anger" Jonathan left the royal presence, but he cast his lot with his father's decline, not with his friend's rise, and "in death they were not divided." His life may be divided into two main parts: 1. The war with the Philistines, commonly called, from its locality, "the war of Michmash." He is already of great importance in the state. Of the three thousand men of whom Saul's standing army was formed, one thousand were under the command of Jonathan at Gibeah. The Philistines were still in the general command of the country; an officer was stationed at Geba, either the same as Jonathan's position or close to it. In a sudden act of youthful daring—as when Tell rose against Gesler, or, as in sacred history, Moses rose against the Egyptian—Jonathan slew this officer, and thus gave the signal for a general revolt. Saul took advantage of it, and the whole population rose, but it was a premature attempt. The Philistines poured in from the plain, and the tyranny became more deeply rooted than ever. Saul and Jonathan (with their immediate attendants) alone had arms amidst the general weakness and disarming of the people. They were encamped at Gibeah, with a small body of six hundred

men; and as they looked down from that height on the misfortunes of their country, and of their native tribe especially, they wept aloud. From this oppression, as Jonathan by his former act had been the first to provoke it, so now he was the first to deliver his people. On the former occasion Saul had been equally with himself involved in the responsibility of the deed. Saul "blew the trumpet;" Saul had "smitten the officer of the Philistines." But now it would seem that Jonathan was resolved to undertake the whole risk himself. "The day"—the day fixed by him—approached; and without communicating his project to any one except the young man whom, like all the chiefs of that age, he retained as his armor-bearer, he sallied forth from Gibeah to attack the garrison of the Philistines stationed on the other side of the steep defile of Michmash. His words are short, but they breathe exactly the ancient and peculiar spirit of the Israelite warrior: "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that Jehovah will work for us: for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few." The answer is no less characteristic of the close friendship of the two young men, already like to that which afterward sprang up between Jonathan and David: "Do all that is in thine heart; . . . behold *I* am with thee; as thy heart is my heart." After the manner of the time, Jonathan proposed to draw an omen for their course from the conduct of the enemy. If the garrison, on seeing them, gave intimations of descending upon them, they would remain in the valley; if, on the other hand, they raised a challenge to advance, they were to accept it. The latter turned out to be the case. The first appearance of the two warriors from behind the rocks was taken by the Philistines as a furtive apparition of "the Hebrews coming forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves," and they were welcomed with a scoffing invitation: "Come up, and we will show you a thing." Jonathan immediately took them at their word. Strong and active as he was—"strong as a lion, and swift as an eagle"—he was fully equal to

the adventure of climbing on his hands and feet up the face of the cliff. When he came directly in view of them, with his armor-bearer behind him, they both, after the manner of their tribe, discharged a flight of arrows, stones and pebbles from their bows, cross-bows and slings, with such effect that twenty men fell at the first onset. A panic seized the garrison, thence spread to the camp, and thence to the surrounding hordes of marauders; an earthquake combined with the terror of the moment; the confusion increased; the Israelites who had been taken slaves by the Philistines during the last three days rose in mutiny; the Israelites who lay hid in the numerous caverns and deep holes in which the rocks of the neighborhood abound sprang out of their subterranean dwellings. Saul and his little band had watched in astonishment the wild retreat from the heights of Gibeah; he now joined in the pursuit, which led him headlong after the fugitives, over the rugged plateau of Bethel, and down the path of Bethhoron to Ajalon. The father and son had not met on that day; Saul only conjectured his son's absence from not finding him when he numbered the people. Jonathan had not heard of the rash curse which Saul invoked on any one who ate before the evening. In the dizziness and darkness which came on after his desperate exertions, he put forth the staff which apparently had (with his sling and bow) been his chief weapon, and tasted the honey which lay on the ground as they passed through the forest. The pursuers in general were restrained even from this slight indulgence by fear of the royal curse; but the moment that the day, with its enforced fast, was over, they flew, like Moslems at sunset during the fast of Ramadan, on the captured cattle, and devoured them, even to the brutal neglect of the law which forbade the dismemberment of the fresh carcasses with the blood. This violation of the law Saul endeavored to prevent and to expiate by erecting a large stone, which served both as a rude table and as an altar—the first altar that was raised under the monarchy. It was in the dead of night, after this wild revel was over, that he

proposed that the pursuit should be continued till dawn; and then, when the silence of the oracle of the high priest indicated that something had occurred to intercept the divine favor, the lot was tried, and Jonathan appeared as the culprit. Jephthah's dreadful sacrifice would have been repeated, but the people interposed in behalf of the hero of that great day, and Jonathan was saved. 1 Sam. xiv. 24–26.

This is the only great exploit of Jonathan's life. But the chief interest of his career is derived from the friendship with David which began on the day of David's return from the victory over the champion of Gath, and continued till his death. It is the first biblical instance of a romantic friendship, such as was common afterward in Greece and has been since in Christendom, and is remarkable both as giving its sanction to these, and is filled with a pathos of its own which has been imitated, but never surpassed, in modern works of fiction. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Each found in each the affection that he found not in his own family; no jealousy of rivalry between the two, as claimants for the same throne, ever interposed: "Thou shalt be king in Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." The friendship was confirmed, after the manner of the time, by a solemn compact often repeated. The first was immediately on their first acquaintance. Jonathan gave David as a pledge his royal mantle, his sword, his girdle and his famous bow. His fidelity was soon called into action by the insane rage of his father against David. He interceded for his life, at first with success. Then the madness returned, and David fled. It was in a secret interview during this flight, by the stone of Ezel, that the second covenant was made between the two friends of a still more binding kind, extending to their mutual posterity, Jonathan laying such emphasis on this portion of the compact as almost to suggest the belief of a slight misgiving on his part of David's future conduct in this

respect. It is this interview which brings out the character of Jonathan in the liveliest colors—his little artifices—his love for both his father and his friend—his bitter disappointment at his father's unmanageable fury—his familiar sport of archery. With passionate embraces and tears the two friends parted, to meet only once more; that one more meeting was far away in the forest of Ziph, during Saul's pursuit of David. Jonathan's alarm for his friend's life is now changed into a confidence that he will escape: "He strengthened his hand in God." Finally, and for the third time, they renewed the covenant, and then parted for ever. 1 Sam. xxiii. 16–18. From this time forth we hear no more till the battle of Gilboa. In that battle he fell, with his two brothers and his father, and his corpse shared their fate. The news of his death occasioned the celebrated elegy of David, in which he, as the friend, naturally occupies the chief place, and which seems to have been sung in the education of the archers of Judah, in commemoration of the one great archer, Jonathan: "He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow."

# XIX.

## DAVID.

NO character has suffered more than that of David, from all sorts of imperfect appreciation. While some have treated him as a monster of cruelty and lust, classing him with the Neros and Domitians, others have invested him with almost divine immunities, as if we had no more right to ask at him than at God, "What dost thou?"—as if his motions had been irrepressible as those of the wind, and his vengeance inevitable as the thunderbolt. David, in our view of him, was neither a monster nor a deity—neither a bad man nor by any means the highest of Scripture worthies. William Hazlitt has nowhere more disgraced his talents than in a wretched paper in the *Round Table,* where he describes David as a crowned spiritual hypocrite, passing from debasing sins to debasing services—debauching Bathsheba, murdering Uriah, and then going to the top of his palace and singing out his penitence in strains of hollow melody. Paine himself never uttered a coarser calumny than this. Nor ever did the pure and lofty spirit of Edward Irving look nobler and speak in higher tones than when, in his preface to *Horne on the Psalms,* he gives a mild yet stern verdict upon the character of this royal bard—a verdict in which judgment and mercy are both found, but with "mercy rejoicing against judgment." Many years have elapsed since we read that paper, and should our views, now to be given, happen, as we hope, to be found to coincide with it, we must

still claim them as our own. We remember little more than its tone and spirit.

David was a composite, though not a chaotic, formation. At first we find him as simple and noble a child of God, nature and genius as ever breathed. A shepherd boy, watching now the lambs and now the stars, his sleep is peradventure haunted by dreams of high enterprise and coming glory, but his days are calm and peaceful as those of the boy in the Valley of Humiliation who carried the herb "heart's-ease" in his bosom, and sang (next to David's own twenty-third Psalm) the sweetest of all pastorals, closing with the lines,

> "Here little, and hereafter bliss,
> Is best from age to age."[1]

And yet this boy had done, even ere he went to the camp of Israel, one deed of "derring-do;" he had wet his hands in the blood of a lion and a bear. This had given him a modest sense of his own strength, and perhaps begun to circulate a secret thrill of ambition throughout his veins; and when he obeyed the command of Jesse to repair to his brethren in the host, it might be with a foreboding of triumph and a smelling of the battle afar off. We can conceive few subjects fitter for picture or poetry than that of the young David measuring the mass of steel—Goliath—with an eye which mingled in its ray wonder, eagerness, anger and

> "That stern joy which warriors feel
> In foemen worthy of their steel."

A hundred battles looked forth in that lingering, longing, insatiate glance. Every one knows the result to the giant of Gath: he fell before the smooth sling-stone. The result on David's mind is not quite so evident; but we think that all the praises and promotion he received did not materially affect the simplicity of his habits or the integrity of his purposes. Nor did, at first,

[1] Pilgrim's Progress.

the persecution of Saul much exasperate his spirit, balanced as that was by the love of Jonathan. But his long-continued flight and exile, the insecurity of his life, the converse he had with "wild men and wild usages" in the cave of Adullam and the wilderness of Ziph, although they failed in weaning him from his God or his Jonathan, or even Saul, did not fail somewhat to embitter his generous nature and to render him less fitted for bearing the prosperity which suddenly broke upon him. More men are prepared for sudden death than for sudden success. Even after he had reached the throne of his father-in-law, there remained long, obscure contests with the remnant of Saul's party, sudden inroads from the Philistines, and a sullen, dead resistance on the part of the old heathen inhabitants of the land, to annoy his spirit. And when afterward he had brought up the ark of the Lord to the city of David—when the Philistines were bridled, the Syrians smitten, the Ammonites chastised, and their city on the point of being taken—from this very pride of place David fell—fell foully—but fell not for ever. From that hour his life ran on in a current of disaster checkered with splendid successes; it was a tract of irregular and ragged glory, tempering at last into a troubled yet beautiful sunset. But all the elements for our judgment of it had been collected by the time that the "matter of Uriah" was fully transacted.

A noble nature, stung before its sin and seared before its time—contending between the whirlpool of passion and the strong, still impulses of poetry and faith—ruling all spirits except *his own*, and yet for ever seeking to regulate it too—sincere in all things—in sin and repentance, but sincerest in repentance—often neglecting the special precept, but ever loving the general tenor of the law—unreconciled to his age or circumstances, and yet always striving after such a reconciliation—harassed by early grief, great temptations, terrible trials in advanced life, and views necessarily dim and imperfect,—David, nevertheless, retained to the last his heart, his intellect, his simplicity, his devotion, above all, his sin-

cerity, loved his God, saw from afar off his Redeemer; and let the man who is "without sin" among his detractors cast the first stone. His character is *checkered*, but the stripes outnumber the stains, and the streaks of light outnumber both. In his life there is no lurking-place—all is plain; the heights are mountains—"the hills of holiness," where a fine spirit walks abroad in singing robes; the valleys are depths out of which you hear the voice of a prostrate penitent pleading for mercy, but nothing is or can be concealed, since it is God's face which shows both the lights and shadows of the scene. David, if not the greatest or best of inspired men, was certainly one of the most extraordinary. You must try him not, indeed, by divine or angelic comparison; but if there be any allowance for the aberration of a tortured, child-like, devout son of genius—if the nobler beasts of the wilderness themselves obey a law and observe a chronology and follow a path of their own—then let the wanderer of Adullam be permitted to enter or to leave his cave at his own time and in his own way, seeing that his wanderings were never intended for a map to others, and that those who follow are sure to find that they are aught but ways of pleasantness or of peace to them.

The position of David is virtually that of the founder of the Jewish monarchy. In this sense his name is repeated in every possible form. "The city of David," "The seed of David," "The house of David," "The key of David," "The oath sworn unto David," are expressions which pervade the whole subsequent history and poetry of the Old Testament and much of the figurative language of the New. The cruelty, the self-indulgence, the too-ready falsehood, sufficiently appear in the events of his history. But there was a grace, a charm, about him which entwined the affections of the nation round his person and his memory, and made him, in spite of the savage manners of the time and the wildness of his own life, at once the centre of something like a court, the head of a new civilization. He was a born king of Israel by his natural gifts. His immense activity

and martial spirit united him by a natural succession to the earlier chiefs of Israel, whilst his accomplishments and genius fitted him especially to exercise a vast control over the whole future greatness of the Church and commonwealth.

The force and passion of the ruder age was blended with a depth of emotion which broke out in every relation of life. Never before had there been such a faithful friend, such an affectionate father. Never before had king or chief inspired such passionate loyalty or given it back in equal degree. The tenderness of his personal affection penetrated his public life. He loved his people with a pathetic compassion beyond even that of Moses. Even from the history we gather that the ancient fear of God was, for the first time, passing into the love of God.

He is the "man after God's own heart," not in the sense of a faultless saint—far from it, even according to the defective standard of Jewish morality; still farther from it if we compare him with the Christianity of a civilized age; but in the sense of the man who was chosen for his own especial work—the work of pushing forward his nation into an entirely new position, both religious and social.

But the hold which David has fixed on the memory of the Church and the world is of a deeper kind than any which he derives even from the romance of his life or the attractiveness of his character. He was not only the founder of the monarchy, but the founder of the Psalter. He is the first great poet of Israel. Although before his time there had been occasional bursts of Hebrew poetry, yet David is the first who gave it its fixed place in the Israelite worship. There is no room for it in the Mosaic ritual. Its absence there may be counted as a proof of the antiquity of that ritual in all its substantial features. For so mighty an innovation no less than a David was needed. That strange musical world of the East—with its gongs and horns and pipes and harps—with its wild dances and wilder contortions—with its songs of question and answer, of strophe and antistrophe,

awakening or soothing, to a degree inconceivable in our tamer West, the emotions of the hearer—was seized by the shepherd minstrel when he mounted the throne, and was formed as his own peculiar province into a great ecclesiastical institution. The exquisite richness of verse and music so dear to him—"the calves of the lips"—took the place of the costly offerings of animals. His harp—or as it was called by the Greek translators, his "psaltery" or "psalter" or guitar—was to him what the wonder-working staff was to Moses, the spear to Joshua, or the sword to Gideon. It was with him in his early youth. It was at hand in the most moving escapes of his middle life. In his last words he seemed to be himself the instrument over which the divine breath passed. United with these poetic powers was a grace so nearly akin to the prophetic gift that he has received the rank of a prophet, though not actually trained or called to the office. By these gifts he became in his life, and still more in his writings, a prophet, a revealer of a new world of religious truth, only inferior, if inferior, to Moses himself.

The Psalter, thus inaugurated, opened a new door into the side of sacred literature. Hymn after hymn was added, altered, accommodated, according to the need of the time. And not only so, but under the shelter of this irregular accretion of hymns of all ages and all occasions, other books, which had no claim to be considered either of the law or of the prophets, forced an entrance and were classed under the common title of "The Psalms," though including books as unlike to each other and to the "Psalter" as Ruth and Ecclesiastes, Chronicles and Daniel. But even without reckoning these accompaniments, the Book of Psalms is, as it were, a little Bible in itself. It is a Bible within a Bible, in which most of the peculiarities, inward and outward, of the rest of the sacred volume are concentrated. As, on the one hand, we gratefully acknowledge the single impulse which brought the book into existence, we recognize no less, on the other hand, the many illustrious poets whose works, underneath that single name,

have come down to us, unknown, yet hardly less truly the offspring of David's mind than had they sprung directly from himself.

The Psalter, thus freely composed, has further become the sacred book of the world in a sense belonging to no other part of the biblical records. Not only does it hold its place in the liturgical services of the Jewish Church—not only was it used more than any other part of the Old Testament by the writers of the New—but it is in a special sense the peculiar inheritance of the Christian Church through all its different branches.

And if we descend from Churches to individuals, there is no one book which has played so large a part in the history of so many human souls. By the Psalms, Augustine was consoled on his conversion and on his deathbed. By the Psalms, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Savonarola were cheered in persecution. With the words of a Psalm, Polycarp, Columba, Hildebrand, Bernard, Francis of Assisi, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Columbus, Henry the Fifth, Edward the Sixth, Ximenes, Xavier, Melanchthon, Jewell, breathed their last. So dear to Wallace in his wanderings was his Psalter that, during his execution, he had it hung before him, and his eyes remained fixed upon it as the one consolation of his dying hours. The unhappy Darnley was soothed in the toils of his enemies by the fifty-fifth Psalm. The sixty-eighth cheered Cromwell's soldiers to victory at Dunbar. Locke in his last days bade his friends read the Psalms aloud, and it was whilst in rapt attention to their words that the stroke of death fell upon him. Lord Burleigh selected them out of the whole Bible as his special delight. They were the framework of the devotions and of the war-cries of Luther; they were the last words that fell on the ear of his imperial enemy, Charles the Fifth.

There are doubtless occasions when the Psalmist speaks as the organ of the nation. But he is for the most part alone with himself and with God. Each word is charged with the intensity of some grief or joy known or unknown. The doctrines of David

strike home and kindle a fire wherever they light, mainly because they are sparks of the incandescence of a living human experience like our own. The patriarchs speak as the fathers of the chosen race; the prophets speak as its representatives and its guides. But the Psalmist speaks as the mouthpiece of the individual soul, of the free, independent, solitary conscience of man everywhere. Then there is the perfect naturalness of the Psalms. It appears, perhaps, most forcibly in their exultant freedom and joyousness of heart. The one Hebrew word which is their very pith and marrow is "hallelujah." They express, if we may so say, the sacred duty of being happy. Be happy, cheerful and thankful as ever we can, we cannot go beyond the Psalms. They laugh, they shout, they cry, they scream for joy. There is a wild exhilaration which rings through them. They exult alike in the joy of battle and in the calm of nature. They see God's goodness everywhere. They are not ashamed to confess it. The bright side of creation is everywhere uppermost; the dark, sentimental side is hardly ever seen. The fury of the thunder-storm, the roaring of the sea, are to them full of magnificence and delight. Like the Scottish poet Sir Walter Scott, in his childhood, at each successive peal they clap their hands in innocent pleasure. The affection for birds and beasts and plants and sun and moon and stars is like that which Francis of Assisi claimed for all these fellow-creatures of God, as his brothers and sisters. There have been those for whom, on this very account, in moments of weakness and depression, the Psalms have been too much; yet not the less is this vein of sacred merriment valuable in the universal mission of the chosen people; and the more so because it grows out of another feeling in the Psalms, which has also jarred strangely on the minds of devout but narrow schools, "the free and princely heart of innocence" which to modern religion has often seemed to savor of self-righteousness and want of proper humility. The Psalmist's bounding, buoyant hope—his fearless claim to be rewarded according to his righteous dealing—his

confidence in his own integrity no less than his agony over his own crimes—his passionate delight in the law, not as a cruel enemy, but as the best of guides, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb,—these are from a different point of the celestial compass from the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. But they have not the less a truth of their own—a truth to nature, a truth to God—which the human heart will always recognize. The frank, unrestrained benediction on the upright, honest man, "the noblest work of God," with which the Psalter opens, is but the fitting prelude to the boundless generosity and prodigality of joy with which at its close it calls on "every creature that breathes," without stint or exception, to "praise the Lord." It may be that such expressions as these owe their first impulse in part to the new epoch of national prosperity and individual energy ushered in by David's reign; but they have swept the mind of the Jewish nation onward toward that mighty destiny which awaited it, and they have served, though at a retarded speed, to sweep on, ever since, the whole spirit of humanity in its upward course. "The burning stream has flowed on after the furnace itself has cooled." As of the classic writers of Greece it has been well said that they possess a charm quite independent of their genius, in the radiance of their brilliant and youthful beauty, so it may be said of the Psalms that they possess a like charm, independent even of their depth of feeling or loftiness of doctrine. In their free and generous grace the youthful, glorious David seems to live over again with a renewed vigor. "All our fresh springs" are in him and in his Psalter.

### DAVID'S LAMENT OVER ABSALOM.

The pall was settled. He who slept beneath
Was straightened for the grave; and as the folds
Sunk to the still proportions, they betrayed
The matchless symmetry of Absalom.
His hair was yet unshorn, and silken curls

Were floating round the tassels as they swayed
To the admitted air.
His helm was at his feet; his banner, soiled
With trailing through Jerusalem, was laid
Reversed beside him; and the jeweled hilt,
Whose diamonds lit the passage of his blade,
Rested, like mockery, on his covered brow.
The soldiers of the king trod to and fro,
Clad in the garb of battle; and their chief,
The mighty Joab, stood beside the bier,
And gazed upon the dark pall steadfastly,
As if he feared the slumberer might stir.
A slow step startled him. He grasped his blade
As if a trumpet rang; but the bent form
Of David entered, and he gave command,
In a low tone, to his few followers,
And left him with his dead. The king stood still
Till the last echo died; then throwing off
The sackcloth from his brow, and laying back
The pall from the still features of his child,
He bowed his head upon him, and broke forth
In the resistless eloquence of woe:

"Alas! my noble boy! that thou shouldst die—
Thou, who wert made so beautifully fair!
That death should settle in thy glorious eye,
And leave his stillness in this clustering hair.
How could he mark thee for the silent tomb,
My proud boy Absalom!

"Cold is thy brow, my son! and I am chill,
As to my bosom I have tried to press thee,
How was I wont to feel my pulses thrill,
Like a rich harp-string, yearning to caress thee,
And hear thy sweet '*My father!*' from these dumb
And cold lips, Absalom!

"The grave hath won thee. I shall hear the gush
Of music, and the voices of the young;
And life will pass me in the mantling blush,
And the dark tresses to the soft winds flung;
But thou no more, with thy sweet voice, shalt come
To meet me, Absalom!

"And, oh, when I am stricken, and my heart,
Like a bruised reed, is waiting to be broken,
How will its love for thee, as I depart,
Yearn for thine ear to drink its last deep token!
It were so sweet, amid death's gathering gloom,
To see thee, Absalom!

"And now, farewell! 'tis hard to give thee up,
With death so like a gentle slumber on thee.
And thy dark sin! Oh, I could drink the cup,
If from this woe its bitterness had won thee.
May God have called thee, like a wanderer, home,
My erring Absalom!"

He covered up his face, and bowed himself
A moment on his child; then giving him
A look of melting tenderness, he clasped
His hands convulsively, as if in prayer;
And as a strength were given him from God,
He rose up calmly, and composed the pall
Firmly and decently, and left him there,
As if his rest had been a breathing sleep.

N. P. Willis.

# XX.

## JOAB.

JOAB was the eldest and most remarkable of the three nephews of David, the children of Zeruiah, David's sister. Their father is unknown. They all exhibit the activity and courage of David's constitutional character, but they never rise beyond this to the nobler qualities which lift him above the wild soldiers and chieftains of the time. Asahel, who was cut off in his youth, and seems to have been the darling of the family, is only known to us from his gazelle-like agility. 2 Sam. ii. 18. Abishai and Joab are alike in their implacable revenge. Joab, however, combines with these ruder qualities something of a more statesmanlike character, which brings him more nearly to a level with his youthful uncle, and unquestionably gives him the second place in the whole history of David's reign.

He first appears after David's accession to the throne at Hebron, thus differing from his brother Abishai, who was already David's companion during his wanderings. He with his two brothers went out from Hebron at the head of David's "servants" or guards, to keep a watch on the movements of Abner, who with a considerable force of Benjamites had crossed the Jordan and come as far as Gibeon, perhaps on a pilgrimage to the sanctuary. The two parties sat opposite each other, on each side of the bank by that city. Abner's challenge, to which Joab assented, led to a desperate struggle between twelve champions from either side,

and the whole number fell from the mutual wounds they received.

This roused the blood of the rival tribes; a general encounter ensued; Abner and his company were defeated, and in his flight, being hard pressed by the swift-footed Asahel, he reluctantly killed the unfortunate youth. The expressions which he uses—"Wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?"—imply that up to this time there had been a kindly, if not a friendly, feeling between the two chiefs. It was rudely extinguished by this deed of blood. The other soldiers of Judah, when they came up to the dead body of their young leader, halted, struck dumb by grief. But his two brothers, on seeing the corpse, only hurried on with greater fury in the pursuit. At sunset the Benjamite force rallied round Abner, and he then made an appeal to the generosity of Joab not to push the war to extremities. Joab reluctantly consented, drew off his troops, and returned to Hebron. They took the corpse of Asahel with them, and on the way halted at Bethlehem in the early morning, to inter it in their family burial-place.

But Joab's revenge on Abner was only postponed. He had been on another of these predatory excursions from Hebron, when he was informed on his return that Abner had in his absence paid a visit to David and been received into favor. He broke out into a violent remonstrance with the king, and then, without David's knowledge, immediately sent messengers after Abner, who was overtaken by them about two miles from Hebron. Abner, with the unsuspecting generosity of his noble nature, returned at once. Joab and Abishai met him in the gateway of the town; Joab took him aside, as if with a peaceful intention, and then struck him a deadly blow "under the fifth rib." It is possible that with the passion of vengeance for his brother may have been mingled the fear lest Abner should supplant him in the king's favor. David burst into passionate

invective and imprecations on Joab when he heard of the act, and forced him to appear in sackcloth and torn garments at the funeral. But it was an intimation of Joab's power which David never forgot. The awe in which he stood of the sons of Zeruiah cast a shade over the whole remainder of his life.

There was now no rival left in the way of Joab's advancement, and soon the opportunity occurred for his legitimate accession to the highest post that David could confer. At the siege of Jebus the king offered the office of chief of the army, now grown into a "host," to any one who would lead the forlorn hope and scale the precipice on which the besieged fortress stood. With an agility equal to that of David himself, or of his brother Asahel, Joab succeeded in the attempt, and became in consequence commander-in-chief—"captain of the host"—the same office that Abner had held under Saul, the highest in the state after the king. His importance was immediately shown by his undertaking the fortification of the conquered city, in conjunction with David.

In this post he was content, and served the king with undeviating fidelity. In the wide range of wars which David undertook, Joab was the acting general, and he therefore may be considered as the founder, as far as military prowess was concerned—the Marlborough, the Belisarius—of the Jewish empire. Abishai, his brother, still accompanied him as captain of the king's "mighty men." He had a chief armor-bearer of his own, and ten attendants to carry his equipment and baggage. He had the charge, formerly belonging to the king or judge, of giving the signal by trumpet for advance or retreat. He was called by the almost regal title of "lord," "the prince of the king's army." His usual residence (except when campaigning) was in Jerusalem, but he had a house and property, with barley-fields adjoining, in the country, near an ancient sanctuary, called, from its nomadic village, "Baal-hazor," where there were extensive sheep-walks. His great war was that against Ammon, which

he conducted in person and brought to a successful issue in three hard-fought campaigns.

But the services of Joab to the king were not confined to these military achievements. In the entangled relations which grew up in David's domestic life, he bore an important part. The first occasion was the unhappy correspondence which passed between him and the king during the Ammonite war respecting Uriah the Hittite, which led to the treacherous sacrifice of Uriah in a sortie. It shows both the confidence reposed by David in Joab and Joab's too unscrupulous fidelity to David. From the possession which Joab thus acquired of the terrible secret of the royal household has been dated, with some probability, his increased power over the mind of the king.

The next occasion on which it was displayed was in his successful endeavor to reinstate Absalom in David's favor after the murder of Amnon. It would almost seem as if he had been guided by the effect produced upon the king by Nathan's parable. A similar apologue he put into the mouth of a "wise woman of Tekoah." The exclamation of David on perceiving the application intimates the high opinion which he entertained of his general: "Is not the hand of Joab in all this?" A like indication is found in the confidence of Absalom that Joab, who had thus procured his return, would also go a step farther and demand his admission to his father's presence. Joab, who evidently thought that he had gained as much as could be expected, twice refused to visit the prince, but having been entrapped into an interview by a stratagem of Absalom, undertook the mission, and succeeded in this also.

The same keen sense of his master's interests that had prompted this desire to heal the breach in the royal family ruled the conduct of Joab no less when the relations of the father and son were reversed by the successful revolt of Absalom. His former intimacy with the prince did not impair his fidelity to the king. He followed him beyond the Jordan, and in the final battle of Eph-

raim assumed the responsibility of taking the rebel prince's dangerous life in spite of David's injunction to spare him, and when no one else had courage to act so decisive a part. He was well aware of the terrible effect it would have on the king, and on this account possibly dissuaded his young friend Ahimaaz from bearing the news; but when the tidings had been broken, he had the spirit himself to rouse David from the frantic grief which would have been fatal to the royal cause. His stern resolution (as he had himself anticipated) wellnigh proved fatal to his own interests. The king could not forgive it, and went so far in his unreasonable resentment as to transfer the command of the army from the too faithful Joab to his other nephew, Amasa, the son of Abigail, who had even sided with the insurgents. In like manner he returned only a reproachful answer to the vindictive loyalty of Joab's brother, Abishai. Nothing brings out more strongly the good and bad qualities of Joab than his conduct in this trying crisis of his history. On the one hand, he remained still faithful to his master; on the other hand, as before in the case of Abner, he was determined not to lose the post he so highly valued. Amasa was commander-in-chief, but Joab had still his own small following of attendants, and with him were the mighty men commanded by his brother Abishai, and the body-guard of the king. With these he went out in pursuit of the remnants of the rebellion. In the heat of pursuit he encountered his rival Amasa, more leisurely engaged in the same quest. At "the great stone" in Gibeon the cousins met. Joab's sword was attached to his girdle; by design or accident it protruded from its sheath; Amasa rushed into the treacherous embrace to which Joab invited him; the unsheathed sword in his left hand plunged into Amasa's stomach; a single blow from that practiced arm, as in the case of Abner, sufficed to do its work. Joab and his brother hurried on to discharge their commission, whilst one of his ten attendants stayed by the corpse, calling on the royal party to follow after Joab. But the deed produced a frightful impression.

The dead body was lying in a pool of blood by the roadside; the pursuers halted, as they came up, at the ghastly sight, till the attendant dragged it out of the road and threw a cloak over it. Then, as if the spell was broken, they followed Joab, now once more captain of the host. He too, when they overtook him, presented an aspect long afterward remembered with horror. The blood of Amasa had spurted all over the girdle to which the sword was attached, and the sandals on his feet were red with the stains left by the falling corpse. But at the moment all were absorbed in the pursuit of the rebels. Once more a proof was given of the widespread confidence in Joab's judgment. In the besieged town of Abel-Bethmaachah, far in the north, the same appeal was addressed to his sense of the evils of an endless civil war that had been addressed to him years before by Abner, near Gibeon. He demanded only the surrender of the rebel chief, and on the sight of his head thrown over the wall withdrew the army and returned to Jerusalem.

His last remonstrance with David was on the announcement of the king's desire to number the people. "The king prevailed against Joab." But Joab's scruples were so strong that he managed to avoid numbering two of the tribes—Levi and Benjamin.

There is something mournful in the end of Joab. At the close of his long life, his loyalty, so long unshaken, at last wavered. "Though he had not turned after Absalom, he turned after Adonijah." This probably filled up the measure of the king's long-cherished resentment. We learn from David's last song that his powerlessness over his courtiers was even then present to his mind, and now on his deathbed he recalled to Solomon's recollection the two murders of Abner and Amasa, with an injunction not to let the aged soldier escape with impunity.

The revival of the pretensions of Adonijah after David's death was sufficient to awaken the suspicions of Solomon. The king

deposed the high priest Abiathar, Joab's friend and fellow-conspirator, and the news of this event at once alarmed Joab himself. He claimed the right of sanctuary within the curtains of the sacred tent, under the shelter of the altar at Gibeon. He was pursued by Benaiah, who at first hesitated to violate the sanctuary of the refuge; but Solomon urged that the guilt of two such murders overrode all such protection. With his hands on the altar, therefore, the gray-headed warrior was slaughtered by his successor, the body was carried to his house "in the wilderness" and there interred. He left descendants, but nothing is known of them.



Solomon.

# XXI.

## SOLOMON.

MAGNIFICENCE is the main quality of Israel's "grand monarque," as Coleridge calls him. The frequent sublimity and the fluctuating interest which surrounded his father's career he possessed not. But the spring-tide of success which was his history, the abundance of his peace, his inexhaustible wealth, the pomp of his establishment, the splendor of the house and the temple which he built, the variety of his gifts and accomplishments, the richness and diversified character of his writings, and the manifold homage paid him by surrounding tribes and monarchs,—all proclaimed him "every inch a king," and have rendered "Solomon and his glory" proverbial to this hour. He sat, too, in the centre of a widespread commerce, bringing in its yearly tribute of wealth to his treasury and of fame to his name. Even when he sinned, it was with a high hand, on a large scale and with a certain regal *gusto;* he did not, like common sinners, sip at the cup of corruption, but drank of it "deep and large," emptying it to the dregs. When satiety invaded his spirit, that too was of a colossal character, and for a season darkened all objects with the shade of "vanity and vexation of spirit." And when he suffered, his groans seemed those of a demigod in torment; his head became waters, and his eyes fountains of tears. Thus, on all his sides, bright or black, he was equally and roundly great. Like a pyramid, the shadow he cast in one direction was as vast as the light he received on the other.

No monarch in history can be compared, on the whole, with Solomon. From the Nebuchadnezzars, the Tamerlanes, and similar "thunderbolts of war," he differs in kind as well as in degree. He was the peaceful temple; they were the armed towers: his wisdom was greater than his strength; they were sceptred barbarians, strong in their military prowess. In accomplishments, and in the combination of good sense with genius, he reminds us of Julius Cæsar; but he too was a man of war from his youth, besides being guilty of crimes, both against his country and his own person, blacker far than any recorded of the proverbialist of Israel—a union, let us rather call him, of some of the qualities of the "good Haroun Alraschid" with some of those of Alfred the Great. To the Oriental grandeur—the love of peace, poetry and pleasure which distinguished the caliph—he added the king's sense of justice, and homely, practical wisdom.

It was his first to prove to the world that peace has greater triumphs and richer glories than war. All the useful as well as elegant arts found in him at once a pattern and a patron. He collected the floating wisdom of his country, after having intermingled it with his own, into compact shape. He framed a rude and stuttering science, beautiful, doubtless, in its simplicity, when he "spake of all manner of trees," from the cedar to the hyssop. He summoned into being the power of commerce, and its infant feats were mighty, and seemed, in that day, magical. He began to bind hostile countries together by the mild tie of barter—a lesson which might have been taught him, in the forest of Lebanon, by the interchange between the "gold clouds metropolitan" above and the soft valleys of Eden below. He built palaces of new and noble architecture; and although no pictures adorned the gates of the temple, or shone above the altar of incense, or met the eyes of the thousands who worshiped within the court of the Gentiles, yet was not that temple itself—with its roof of marble and gold, its flights of steps, its altars of steaming incense, its cherubic shapes, its bulls and molten sea—one picture,

painted on the canvas of the city of Jerusalem, with the aid of the hand which had painted long before the gallery of the heavens? In poetry, too, he excelled, without being so filled and transported by its power as his father, and as with David, all his accomplishments and deeds were, during the greater part of his life, dedicated to and accepted by Heaven.

Such is an outline of his efforts for the advancement of his country. Amid them all the feature which most exalts and most likens him to Jesus is the peace of his reign. It was this which entitled him to build the temple; it is this which casts a certain soft green light, like the light of the rainbow, around his glory; and it is this which directs every Christian eye instantly to a "greater than Solomon," in the promised peace and blessedness which the seventy-second Psalm predicts as the results of the reign of David's son. The gorgeous Solomon and the humble Jesus wear one badge—the white rose of peace—the one above his crown of gold, and the other amid his crown of thorns.

Every man has a dark period in his career, whether it is publicly known or concealed, whether the man outlive or sink before it. Solomon too had his "hour and power of darkness." Stern justice forbids us to wink at its principal cause. It was luxury aggravated into sin. Fullness of bread, security, splendor, wealth, like many suns shining at once upon his head, enfeebled and corrupted a noble nature. Amid the mazy dances of strange women he was whirled away into the embrace of demon gods. He polluted the simplicity of the service he had himself established. He rushed headlong into many a pit which he had himself pointed out, till "Wisdom" refused to be "justified" of this her chosen child. Sorrow trod faithfully and fast in his track of sin. Luxury begat listlessness, and this listlessness began soon to burn, a still slow fire, about his heart. His misery became wonderful, passing the woe of man; the more as in the obscuration of his great light, enemies, like birds obscene and beasts of darkness, began to stir abroad. The general opinion of the

Church, founded upon the Book of Ecclesiastes, is that he repented and forsook his sins before death. Be this true or not, the history of his fall is equally instructive. The pinnacle ever overhangs the precipice. Any great disproportion between gifts and graces renders the former fatal as a knife is to the suicide or handwriting to the forger. We ardently hope that Solomon became a true penitent. But though he had not, his writings, so far from losing their value, would gain new force; the figure of their fallen author would form a striking frontispiece, and their solemn warnings would receive an amen, as from the caves of perdition. A slain Solomon! Since fell Lucifer, son of the morning, what more impressive proof of the power of evil? And, like him, he would seem majestic though in "ruins"—not "less than archangel ruined, and the excess of glory obscured." Alas! is it not still often so in life? Do you not often see beings whom, for their powers, accomplishments or charms, you must almost worship, on whom the sun looks with fonder and more lingering ray, attracting, by their fatal beauty, the dark powers, and becoming monuments of folly or miracles of woe? Is there not what we must, in our ignorance, call a mysterious ENVY in the universe, which will not allow the beautiful to become the perfect, nor the strong the omnipotent, nor the lofty to reach the clouds? That ENVY (if we dare use the word) is *yet unspent;* and other mighty shades, hurled down into destruction, may be doomed to hear their elder brethren, from Lucifer to Byron, raising the thin shriek of gloomy salutation, "Are ye also become weak as we?" as they follow them into their cheerless regions.

With a bound of gladness we pass from the dark, uncertain close of Solomon's life to his works and genius. In these he exhibits himself in three aspects—a poetical proverbialist, a poetical inquirer and a poetical lover; the first, in his Proverbs; the second, in the Book of Ecclesiastes; and the third, in the Song of Songs. But in all three you see the true soul of a poet, under-

standing poet in that high sense in which the greatest poet is the wisest man.

David was essentially a lyrical, Solomon is a combination of the didactic and descriptive, poet. His pictures of folly and his praises of wisdom prove his didactic, many scenes in the Song, and, besides others, his picture of old age in Ecclesiastes, his descriptive, powers. His fire, compared with David's, is calm and glowing—a guarded furnace, not a flame tossed by the wind; his flights are fewer, but they are as lofty, and more sustained. With less fire, he has more figure; the colors of his style are often rich as the humming-bird's wing, and proclaim at once a later age and a more voluptuous fancy. The father has written hymns which storm the feelings, melt the heart, rouse the devotion, of multitudes; the son has painted still rich pictures which touch the imagination of the solitary and the thoughtful. The one, though a great, can hardly be called a wise, poet; the other was the poet-sage of Israel—his imagination and intellect were equal, and they interpenetrated.

The Proverbs appear to have been collected by him, with many important additions, into their present form. A few others were annexed afterward. They now lie before us, a massive collection of sententious truths, around which Solomon has hung illustrations, consisting of moral paintings and of meditative flights.

We have first the material, or Proverbs proper. A proverb may perhaps be best defined as a common-sense truth condensed in a sentence and sealed or starred with an image. It was certainly a fine conception, that of curdling up the common sense of mankind into pleasing and portable form—of driving the flocks of loose, wandering thoughts from the wide common into the pen-folds of proverbs. Proverbs have been compared to the flights of oracular birds. They tell great general truths. They show the same principles and passions to have operated in every age, and prove thus the unity of man. They engrave, unintentionally, ancient manners and customs, and serve as medals as well

as maxims. Like fables, they convey truth to the young with all the freshness and the force of fiction. In the comparative richness or meagreness of a nation's proverbs may be read much of its intellect and character; indeed, Fletcher's saying about the songs of a country may be transferred to its proverbs—they are better than its laws; nay, they are its laws—not the less powerful that they are not confined to statute-books, but wander from tongue to tongue and hearth to hearth. The Proverbs proper, in Solomon's collection, are not only rich in truth, but exceedingly characteristic of the Jewish people and of those early ages. The high tendencies of the Hebrew mind—its gravity, its austerity, its constant recognition of justice as *done now*, its identification of *evil* with error ("Do not they err that devise evil?"), of crime with folly, and the perpetual up-rushing reference to Deity as a near presence—are nowhere more conspicuous than here. The truth inscribed in them is rarely abstract or transcendental; towering up to God, on the one hand, in the shape of worship, it is always seeking entrance into man, on the other, in the form of practice. Yet profound as wisdom itself are many of its sentences. "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." "The righteous wisely *considereth* the house of the wicked." "A merry heart doeth good like medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones." "The *desire* of the slothful killeth him." "Open rebuke is better than secret love." Let those who are in the habit of regarding the Proverbs as a mass of truisms, ponder such and many similar sentences. We find all that is valuable in Emerson's famous essays on "Compensation" and "Spiritual Laws" contained in two or three of those old abrupt sentences which had perhaps floated down from before the flood. The imagery in which they are enshrined has a homely, quaint richness, and adds an antique setting to these "ancient, most domestic ornaments."

Around such strong simplicities, rescued from the wreck of ages, the genius of Solomon has suspended certain pictures and meditations indubitably all his own. Not only do they stand out from and above the rest of the book, not only are they too lengthy to have been preserved by tradition, but they bear the mark of his munificent and gorgeous mind. Some of them are moral sketches, such as those of the simple youth, in the seventh chapter; of the strange woman, in the ninth; of the drunkard and glutton, in the twenty-third; and of the virtuous woman, in the twenty-first — sketches reminding you, in their fullness, strength and fidelity, of the masterpieces of Hogarth, who had them avowedly in his eye; others are pictures of natural objects, looking in amid his moralizings as sweetly and refreshingly as roses at the open window of a summer schoolroom. Such we find at the close of the twenty-seventh chapter: "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. The hay appeareth, and the tender grass showeth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered; the lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price (or rent) of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens." A third class consists of poetic peans in praise of wisdom, and solemn appeals to those who reject its counsel and will none of its reproof. The most plaintive of these occurs in the first chapter of the book, and forms a striking motto upon its opening portals. Scripture contains no words more impressive than Wisdom's warning: "Because I called, and ye refused; therefore I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your destruction cometh as a whirlwind." The laughter of a God is a tremendous conception. Suppose the lightning a ghastly smile, and the after-thunder a peal of laughter from the sky at poor, cowering man; what a new horror would this add to the tragedy of the storm! and yet it were but a hieroglyphic of the irony implied in divine derision. While the giants were preparing, with

labor dire and din far heard, to storm the skies, the "gods," says Paracelsus, "were calm, and Jove prepared his thunder—all old tales." But in the hearing of the Hebrew poet, while the kings of the earth are plotting against the Lord and his anointed, a laugh, instead of thunder, shakes the heavens, makes the earth to tremble, and explodes in a moment the long-laid designs of the enemy.

The praise and personification of wisdom reach Solomon's highest pitch. To personify an attribute well is a great achievement; to sustain "strength" or "force" or "beauty" through a simile or an apostrophe is not easy, much less to supply a long soliloquy for the lips of eternal Wisdom. Macaulay has coupled Bunyan and Shelley together as masters in the power of glorifying abstractions—of painting spiritual conceptions in the colors of life; nay, spoken of them as if they had been the first and greatest in the art. He has forgotten Æschylus and those strong life-like forms who aid in binding Prometheus to his rock. He has forgotten Solomon's Wisdom, who stands up an "equal among mightiest energies," and speaks in tones so similar to, that he has often been supposed one of, the Great Three: "When he prepared the heavens, *I* was there; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, *I* was by him, and *I* was daily his delight: *I* was set up from everlasting."

We have mentioned the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Interesting in itself, that work is so also as one of a class of writings of which Ecclesiastes was the first. We refer to spiritual autobiographies. We sigh and cry in vain for an authentic account of the inner life of Shakespeare or Bacon or Burke; but we have that (according to general belief) of Solomon, that of Bunyan, and that of a modern who chooses to entitle himself "Sartor Resartus." It were curious, and perhaps something better than curious, to review these three earnest histories together. Now, what first strikes us about them is their great similarity. Three powerful minds, at the distance of ages,

in the most diverse ranks, circumstances and states of society, are found, in different dialects, asking the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" struggling in different bogs of the same "Slough of Despond," trying many expedients to be rid of their burdens, and at length finding, or fancying they have found, a final remedy. It is, then, the mark of man to wear a burden; it is the mark of the highest men to bear the heaviest burdens; and it is the mark of the brave and bravest men to struggle most to be free from them. The sun of the civilization of the nineteenth century only shows the burden in a broader light, and makes the struggle against it more conspicuous and perhaps more terrible. The preacher from the throne and the preacher from the tub utter the same message; in all, the struggle seems made in good faith—all are in earnest, all have surrounded their researches with a poetic beauty only inferior to their personal interest, and all seem to typify large classes of cognate minds.

Their difficulties, however, assume diversity of form and eliminate diversities of feeling. Solomon's weariness is not altogether, though it is in part, that of the jaded sensualist; its root lies deeper. It is the contrast between the grandeur of the human mind and the shortness of human life, the meanness of earthly things and the frailty of the human frame, that amazes and perplexes him. The thought of such a being, surrounded by such circumstances, inhabiting such a house and dismissed only into the gulf of death, haunts his mind like a spectre. That spectre he in vain seeks to reason away—to drown, to dissipate or to moralize away—to outstare with a hardy look, to bring under any theory, to find any path of life where it is not; still it rises before him, embittering his food, shadowing his wine-cup, making business a drudgery, the reading or making of books a weariness, and pleasure a refined torment. Wild at times with uncertainty, he spurns at the very distinctions between right and wrong, knowledge and ignorance, and prays to "God to manifest to the sons of men that they are but beasts" (what a text for Swift!

nay, are not all his works really sermons on it?); but, *with the spectre reflected on them*, these great barriers arise again, and he confesseth that "wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." Death, being to him but faintly gilded with immortality, presents little prospect of relief. And thus does the wise, wealthy and gifted king toss to and fro on his couch of golden fire, and the Book of Ecclesiastes is simply a record of the uneasy motions and helpless cries of a mind as vacant as vast, seeking to be filled, and awakening an echo only of the horse-leech's cry, "Give, give!"

In Bunyan the difficulty is rather moral than intellectual. His spirit is bowed under a sense of sin and of its infinite, endless consequences. He is humble, as if all hell were bound up in the burden on his back. "How shall I be happy on earth?" is Solomon's question; "How shall I cease to be unhappy here and hereafter?" is Bunyan's. Both feel themselves miserable, but to Bunyan's mind his misery seems more the result of personal guilt than of the necessary limitations of human life and of the human understanding.

In Sartor we have great doubt and darkness expressed in the language of the present day. But it is not so much his personal imperfection, or the contrast between the capacities of his soul and the vanity and shortness of his life, which affects him, as it is the uncertainty of his religious creed. Devoured by the religious element as by central fire, the faith of his fathers supplies, he thinks, no adequate fuel. Unable to believe it fully, he is incapable of hating or of striking at its roots; he deems that rottenness has withered it; but is it not still the old elm tree under which, in childhood, he sported, mused and prayed? No other shelter or sanctuary can he find. And then, in wild, fierce, yet self-collected wanderings, "Gehenna buckled under his calm belt," he walks astray over the wilderness of this world, seeking, above all things, after rest, or that he should awake and find his pilgrimage, indeed, to be a dream.

Thus pass on the three notable pilgrims—the crowned Solomon, the bush-lipped and fiery-eyed Baptist, and the strong literary Titan of this age—each, for a season, carrying his hand, like the victims in Vathek, upon his breast, and saying, "It burns." All attain at last a certain peace and satisfaction. The conclusion of Solomon's whole matter is, "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." "Here is one solid spot amid an ocean of vexation, of uncertainty, of contradiction and of vanity, and on it I will rest my weary foot." Bunyan, a poor burdened sinner, clings to the cross, and it is straightway surrounded by the shining ones, who come from heaven to heal and comfort the sufferer. Sartor says, "I am not meant for pleasure—I despise it; happiness is not meant for me nor for man, but I may be blessed in my misery and darkness, and this is far better." All these results seem beautiful in the light of the tears and the tortures through which they have been reached. All are sincere and strong-felt. But while the last is vague and unsupported as a wandering leaf, while the first is imperfect as the age in which it was uttered, the second is secure in its humility, strong in its weakness, has ministered and is ministering comfort, peace and hope—how living and life-giving to thousands!—and if it fail,

> "The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble."

We leave the machinery, the meaning and the manners of Solomon's Song to Charles Taylor, Pye Smith and other critics; we have a sentence to say as to its spirit and poetry. It is conceived throughout in a vein of soft and tender feeling, and suffused with a rich, slumberous light, like that of an afternoon in June, trembling amid beds of roses. There are flowers, but they are not stirred, but fanned, by the winds of passion. The winds of passion themselves are asleep to their own music; the figures of speech are love-sick; the dialogues seem carried on in whispers.

Over all the scenery—from the orchards of pomegranates, the trees of frankincense and the fountains of the gardens, to the lions' dens and the mountains of the leopards—there rests a languor like sunny mist, and shines "the bloom of young desire, and purple light of love." To call all this the effect of an Oriental climate and genius is incorrect; for, first, all the writings in Scripture were by Orientals; and secondly, we find certain Occidental poems, such as "Romeo and Juliet" or "Lalla Rookh," nearly as rich as the Song. We must either trace it to some sudden impulse given to the imagination of Solomon, whether by spring coming before her time, or appearing in more than her wonted beauty, or flushing over the earth with more than her wonted spirit-like speed, or by the access of a new passion which, even in advanced life, makes all things, from the winter in the blood to the face of nature, new and fresh, as if after a shower of sunny rain; or we may trace it, with the general voice of the Church, to the influence of new views of the loveliness of Messiah's character and of his future Church, around whom, as if hastily to pay the first-fruits of the earth's homage to her Lord and his bride, cluster in here all natural beauties, at once reflecting their image and multiplying their splendors. Solomon might have had in his eye a similar vision to that afterward seen by John of the bride, the Lamb's wife, coming down from God out of heaven; and surely John himself never described his vision under sweeter, although he has with sublimer, images: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

We notice in this poem two classes of descriptions—the one of persons, the other of natural scenes—and a singular contrast between them. Solomon's description of persons is, in general, gorgeous in exuberance. Images from artificial and from natural objects are collected, till the bride or bridegroom is decked with

as many ornaments as a summer's landscape or a winter's night sky; the raven's plumage is plucked from his wing; the dove's eye is extracted from its socket; perfumes are brought from beds of spices, and lilies led drooping out of their low valleys; nay, the vast Lebanon is himself ransacked to garnish and glorify the one dear image. On the other hand, the description of natural scenes is simple in the extreme, yet beautiful as if Nature were describing herself: "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." This is the green of nature looking in amid the glare of passion. We have here love first exaggerating the object beloved, and then retiring to hide her blushes of shame amid the cool leaves of the garden.

We find in Shakespeare a similar intermixture of natural objects with passionate scenes, and a similar subdued tone in their description. It is not that he does this for the sake of effect, nor that he quails—he merely cools—before nature. The natural allusions act like the touch of female affection laid on the red brow of passion and opening the fountain of tears. His madmen, like poor Lear, are crowned with flowers; his castles of gloom and murder are skimmed by swallows and swaddled in delicate air; in his loneliest ruins lurk wild grasses and flowers, and around them the lightning itself becomes a crown of glory.

Regarding the question as to the *Christian* application of the Song, as still a moot and as a non-essential point, we forbear to express an opinion on it. As a love dialogue, colored to the proper degree with a sensuous flush, "beautiful exceedingly" in its poetry, and portraying with elegance ancient customs and the inextinguishable principles of the human heart, this poem is set unalterably in its own niche. It has had many commentaries, but, in our judgment, the only writer who has caught its warm and glowing spirit is Samuel Rutherford, who has not, indeed,

written a commentary upon it, but whose *Letters* are inspired by its influence and have nearly reproduced all its language. Despite the extravagances with which they abound, when we consider the heavenliness of their spirit, the richness of their fancy, the daring yet devout tone of their language, the wrestling earnestness of their exercise, their aspirings after the Saviour, in whom the writer's soul often sees "seven heavens," and to gain whom he would burst through "ten hells,"—we say, "Blessings and perfumes on the memory of those dungeons whence so many of these letters came, and on that of their rapt, seraphic author, whose chains have been glorious liberty to many a son of God!" The soul was strong which could spring heaven-high under his prison load, and which has made the cells of his supposed infamy holy and haunted ground both to the lovers of liberty and the worshipers of God.

It is with a certain melancholy that we dismiss the great monarch of Israel. We remember once feeling a strong shudder of horror at hearing an insinuation (we believe not true) that the author of a very popular and awful religious poem was not himself a pious man. It was one of those assertions which make the heart quake and the hand catch convulsively at the nearest object, as if the earth were sinking below us. But the thought of the writer of a portion of the Bible being a "castaway"—a thought entertained by some of repute in the Christian world—is far more painful. It may not, as we have seen, detract from, but rather add to, the effect of his writings, but does it not surround them with a black margin? Does not every sentence of solemn wisdom they contain seem clothed in mourning for the fate of its parent? On Solomon's fate we dare pronounce no judgment; but even granting his final happiness, it is no pleasing task to record the mistakes, the sins, the sorrows or even the repentance of a being originally so noble. If at "evening-time it was light" with him, yet did not a scorching splendor torment the noon, and did not thunders, melting

into heavy showers, obscure the after-day? The "glory of Solomon" is a fearful and troubled glory; how different from the meek light of the life of Isaac—most blameless of patriarchs—whose history is that of a quiet, gray autumnal day where, with no sun visible, all above and below seems diluted sunshine—a day as dear as it is beautiful, and which dies regretted as it has lived enjoyed!

# XXII.

## ELIJAH.

AHAB is the first of the kings of Israel who appears to have practiced polygamy. But over his harem presided a queen who has thrown all her lesser rivals into the shade. For the first time the chief wife of an Israelite king was one of the old accursed Canaanite race. A new dynasty now sat on the Tyrian throne founded by Eth-baal. He had, according to the Phœnician records, gained the crown by murder of his brother, and he united to the royal dignity his former office of high priest of Ashtaroth. The daughter of Eth-baal was Jezebel, a name of dreadful import to Israelitish ears, though in later ages it has reappeared under the innocent form of Isabella.

The marriage of Ahab with this princess was one of those turning-points in the history of families where a new influence runs like poison through all its branches and transforms it into another being. Jezebel was a woman in whom, with the reckless and licentious habits of an Oriental queen, were united the fiercest and sternest qualities inherent in the old Semitic race. Her husband, in whom generous and gentle feelings were not wanting, was yet of a weak and yielding character, which soon made him a tool in her hands. Even after his death, through the reigns of his sons, her presiding spirit was the evil genius of the dynasty. Through her daughter Athaliah—a daughter worthy of the mother—her influence extended to the rival king-

dom. The wild license of her life and the magical fascination of her arts or her character became a proverb in the nation. Round her and from her, in different degrees of nearness, is evolved the awful drama of the most eventful crisis of this portion of the Israelite history.

The first indication of her influence was the establishment of the Phœnician worship on a grand scale in the court of Ahab. To some extent this was the natural consequence of the depravation of the public worship of Jehovah by Jeroboam, which seems under Omri to have taken a more directly idolatrous turn. But still the change from a symbolical worship of the one true God, with the innocent rites of sacrifice and prayer, to the cruel and licentious worship of the Phœnician divinities, was a prodigious step downward, and left traces in Northern Palestine which no subsequent reformations were able entirely to obliterate. Two sanctuaries were established—one for each of the great Phœnician deities—at each of the two new capitals of the kingdom. The sanctuary of Ashtaroth, with its accustomed grove, was under Jezebel's special sanction, at the palace of Jezreel. Four hundred priests or prophets ministered to it, and were supported at her table. A still more remarkable sanctuary was dedicated to Baal on the hill of Samaria. It was of a size sufficient to contain all the worshipers of Baal that the northern kingdom could furnish. Four hundred and fifty prophets frequented it. In the interior was a kind of inner fastness or adytum, in which were seated or raised on pillars the figures carved in wood of the Phœnician deities as they were seen in vision, centuries later, by Jezebel's fellow-countryman, Hannibal, in the sanctuary of Gades. In the centre was Baal, the sun-god; around him were the inferior divinities. In front of the temple stood on a stone pillar the figure of Baal alone.

As far as this point of the history the effect of the heathen worship was not greater than it had been at Jerusalem. But there soon appeared to be a more energetic spirit at work than

had ever come forth from the palace of Solomon or Rehoboam. Now arose the first of a long series of like events in ecclesiastical history—the first great persecution—the first persecution on a large scale which the Church has witnessed in any shape. The extermination of the Canaanites, however bloody and unlike the spirit of Christian times, had yet been in the heat of war and victory. Those who remained in the land were unmolested in their religious worship, as they were in their tenure of property and of office. It was reserved for the heathen Jezebel to exemplify the principle of persecution in its most direct form. To her, and not to Moses or Joshua, the bitter intolerance of modern times must look back as its legitimate ancestress.

The first beginnings of the persecution are not recorded. A chasm occurs in the sacred narrative which must have contained the story, only known to us through subsequent allusions—how the persecutors passed from hill to hill, destroying the many altars which rose, as in the south, so in the north, of Palestine, to the one true God—how the prophets who had hitherto held their own in peril were hunted down as the chief enemies of the new religion. Now began those hidings in caves and dens of the earth—the numerous caverns of the limestone rocks of Palestine—the precursors of the history of the Catacombs and the Covenanters. A hundred fugitives might have been seen, broken up into two companies, guided by the friendly hand of the chief minister of Ahab's court—the Sebastian of this Jewish Diocletian—and hid in spacious caverns, probably among the clefts of Carmel.

It might have seemed as if, in the kingdom of Israel, the last remnant of the true religion were to perish. But the blessing which had been pronounced on the new kingdom was still mightier than its accompanying curse. Besides, to many faithful ones, the neighboring kingdom of Judah became a refuge.

It was at this crisis that there appeared the very chief of the prophets. "Alone, alone, alone"—so thrice over is the word

emphatically repeated—the loftiest, sternest spirit of the true faith raised up face to face with the proudest and fiercest spirit of the old Asiatic paganism—against Jezebel rose up Elijah the Tishbite.

He stood alone against Jezebel. He stands alone in many senses among the prophets. Nursed in the bosom of Israel, the prophetical portion—if one may so say—of the chosen people, vindicating the true religion from the nearest danger of overthrow, setting at defiance by invisible power the whole forces of the Israelite kingdom, he reached a height equal to that of Moses and Samuel in the traditions of his country. He was the prophet for whose return in later years his countrymen have looked with most eager hope.

He appears to have given the whole order a new impulse, both in form and spirit, such as it had not had since the death of Samuel. Then they were "companies, bands of prophets;" now they are "sons, children of the prophets;" and Elijah first, and Elisha afterward, appeared as the "Father," the "Abbot," the "Father in God," of the whole community. His mission was, however, not to be the revealer of a new truth, but the champion of the old forgotten law. He was not so much a prophetic teacher as the precursor of prophetic teachers. As his likeness in the Christian era came to prepare the way for One greater than himself, so Elijah came to prepare the way for the close succession of prophets who, for the next hundred years, sustained both Israel and Judah by hopes and promises before unknown. As of Luther, so of Elijah, it may be said that he was a reformer and not a theologian. He wrote, he predicted, he taught, almost nothing. He is to be valued not for what he said, but for what he did; not because he created, but because he destroyed.

For this his especial mission his life and appearance especially qualified him. Of all the prophets he is the one who is most removed from modern times, from Christian civilization. There is a wildness, an isolation, a roughness about him, contrasting

forcibly even with the mild beneficence of his immediate successor, Elisha, still more with the bright serenity of Isaiah and the plaintive tenderness of Jeremiah, but most of all with the patience and loving-kindness of the gospel. Round his picture in the churches of Eastern Christians at the present day are placed, by a natural association, the decapitated heads of their enemies. Abdallah Pasha, the fierce lord of Acre, almost died of terror from a vision in which he believed himself to have seen Elijah sitting on the top of Carmel. It is the likeness of his stern seclusion which is reproduced in John the Baptist, and which in him is always contrasted with the character of Christ.

The other prophets — Moses, Samuel, Elisha, Isaiah — were constantly before the eyes of their countrymen. But Elijah they saw only by partial and momentary glimpses. He belonged to no special place. The very name of his birthplace is disputed. "There was no nation or kingdom" to which Ahab had not sent to find him, "but behold, they found him not." As soon as he was seen, "the breath of the Lord carried him away, whither they knew not." He was as if constantly in the hand of God. "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand," was his habitual expression—a slave constantly waiting to do his master's bidding. For an instant he was seen here and there at spots far apart—sometimes in the ravine of the Cherith in the Jordan valley, sometimes in the forests of Carmel; now on the seashore of Zidon, at Zarephath; now in the wilderness of Horeb, in the distant south; then far off on his way to the northern Damascus; then on the top of some lonely height on the way to Ekron; then snatched away "on some mountain or some valley" in the desert of Jordan. He was in his lifetime what he is still in the traditions of the Eastern Church—the prophet of the mountains.

Whatever might be the exact spot of his birth, he was of "the inhabitants of Gilead." He was the greatest representative of the tribes from beyond the Jordan. Their wild and secluded character is his no less. Wandering, as we have seen, over the

hills of Palestine, with no rest or fixed habitation—fleet as the wind when the hand of the Lord was upon him and he ran before the chariot of Ahab from Carmel to Jezreel—he was like the heroes of his own tribe of Gad, in David's life, who swam the Jordan in flood-time, "whose face were as the faces of lions, and whose feet were swift as the roes upon the mountains;" like the Bedouins from the same region at the present day, who run with unwearied feet by the side of the traveler's camel, and whose strange forms are seen for a moment behind rock and tree, in city or field, and then vanish again into their native wilderness. And such as they are, such was he also in his outward appearance. Long shaggy hair flowed over his back, and a large rough mantle of sheepskin, fastened around his loins by a girdle of hide, was his only covering. This mantle, the special token of his power, at times he would strip off and roll up like a staff in his hand, at other times wrap his face in it. These characteristics of the Arab life were dignified but not destroyed by his high prophetic mission, and were clearly brought out in the outstanding events of his career.

The story of Elijah, like the story of Athanasius, is full of sudden reverses. The prophets of Baal were destroyed; Ahab was cowed. But the ruling spirit of the hierarchy and of the kingdom remained undaunted; Jezebel was not dismayed. With one of those tremendous vows which mark the history of the Semitic race, both within and without the Jewish pale—the vow of Jephthah, the vow of Saul, the vow of Hannibal—she sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "As surely as thou art Elijah, and I am Jezebel, so may God do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life to-morrow, about this time, as the life of one of them."

The prophet who had confronted Ahab and the national assembly trembled before the implacable queen. It was the crisis of his life. One only out of vast multitudes remained faithful to him—the Zidonian boy of Zarephath—as Jewish tradition be-

lieved, the future Jonah. With this child as his sole companion, he left the borders of Israel and entered—as far as we know, for the first and only time—the frontier of the rival kingdom. But he halted not there. Only an apocryphal tradition points out the mark of his sleeping form, on a rock halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. He reached the limit of the Holy Land. At Beersheba he left his attendant youth, and thence plunged into the desert. Under a solitary flowering broom of the desert he lay down to die: "It is enough; now, O Jehovah, take away my life; for *I* am not better than my fathers." It is the desponding cry of many a gallant spirit in the day of disappointment and desertion. But, once and again, an unknown messenger or an angelic visitant gave him sustenance and comfort, and "in the strength of that meat he went forty days and forty nights" across the platform of the Sinaitic desert, till he came "to the mount of God, to Horeb." It is the only time since the days of Moses that the course of the sacred history brings us back to these sacred solitudes. Of pilgrims, if any there were, to those early haunts of Israel, Elijah's name alone has come down to us. In "*the* cave"—so it is called, whether from its being the usual resort, or from the fame of this single visit—in the cave, well known then, though uncertain now, Elijah passed the night. There is nothing to confirm, but there is nothing to contradict, the belief that it may have been in that secluded basin which has been long pointed out as the spot, beneath the summit of what is called the "Mount of Moses." One tall cypress stands in the centre of the little upland plain. A ruined chapel covers the rock on which the prophet is believed to have rested, on the slope of the hill. A well and tank, ascribed to him, are on the other side of the basin. The granite rocks enclose it on every side, as though it were a natural sanctuary. No scene could be more suitable for the vision which follows. Elijah here received the most marked manifestation of the divine presence with which he was, so far as we know, ever favored. It was a marked

crisis, not only in his life, but in the history of the whole prophetic dispensation.

He is drawn out by the warning, like that which came to Moses on the same spot, and stands on the mountain-side, expecting the signs of the divine presence. He listened, and there came the sound of a rushing hurricane, which burst through the mountain-wall and rolled down the granite rocks in massive fragments around him, "but Jehovah was not in the wind." He stood firm on his feet, expecting it again, and under his feet the solid mountain shook with the shock of a mighty earthquake, "but Jehovah was not in the earthquake." He looked out on the hills as they rose before him in the darkness of the night, and they flamed with flashes of fire, as in the days of Moses, "but Jehovah was not in the fire." And then in the deep stillness of the desert air, unbroken by falling stream or note of bird or tramp of beast or cry of man, came the whisper of a voice as of a gentle breath—of a voice so small that it was almost like silence. Then he knew that the moment was come. He drew, as was his wont, his rough mantle over his head; he wrapped his face in its ample folds; he came out from the sheltering rock and stood beneath the cave to receive the divine communications.

They blended with the vision; one cannot be understood without the other. They both alike contain the special message to Elijah and the universal message to the universal Church. Each is marked and explained by the divine question and the human answer, twice repeated: "What doest thou here, Elijah: thou, the prophet of Israel, here in the deserts of Arabia?" "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." He thinks that the best boon that he can ask is that his life should be taken away. It is a failure, a mistake; he is not better than his fathers. Such is the complaint of Elijah, which carries with

it the complaint of many a devout heart and gifted mind when the world has turned against them, when their words and deeds have been misinterpreted, when they have struggled in vain against the wickedness, the folly, the stupidity of mankind. But the answer to them is contained in the blessing on independence. It is the blessing on Athanasius against the world; it is the encouragement to the angel Abdiel: "Amongst the faithless, faithful only he." Resistance to evil, even in the desert solitude, is a new starting-point of life. He has still a task before him: "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus." He is to go on through good report and evil, though his own heart fail him and hundreds fall away. When he comes, he is to anoint Gentile and Hebrew, king and prophet. His work is not over; it has just begun. In the three names, Hazael, Jehu, Elisha, is contained the history of the next generation of Israel.

But the vision reaches beyond his own immediate horizon. It discloses to him the true relation of a prophet to the world and to the Church. The queen with fire and sword, the splendid temples of Jezreel and Samaria, the whole nation gone astray after her, seemed to be on the one side, and the solitary prophet in the solitary wilderness on the other side. So it seemed, but so it was not. The wind, the earthquake and the fire might pass over him, but God was not in them. Nor was he in the power and grandeur of the state or Church of Israel. Deep down in the heart of the nation, in the caves of Carmel, unknown to him, unknown to each other, are seven thousand who had not, by word or deed, acknowledged the power of Baal. In them God was still present. In them was the first announcement of the doctrine, often repeated by later prophets, of an "Israel within Israel"—of a remnant of good which embraced the true hope of the future. It is the profound evangelical truth, then first beginning to dawn upon the earth, that there is a distinction between the nation and the individual, between the outward divisions of

sects or Churches and the inward divisions which run across them—good in the midst of evil, truth in the midst of error, internal invisible agreement amidst external visible dissension.

It is further a revelation to Elijah, not only concerning himself and the world, but concerning God also. He himself had shared in the outward manifestations of divine favor which appeared to mark the old dispensation—the fire on Carmel, the storm from the Mediterranean, the avenging sword on the banks of the Kishon. These signs had failed, and he was now told that in these signs, in the highest sense, God was not—not in these, but in the still small gentle whisper of conscience and solitude, was the surest token that God was near to him. Nay, not in his own mission, grand and gigantic as it was, would after ages so clearly discern the divine inspiration, as in the still small voice of justice and truth that breathed through the writings of the later prophets, for whom he only prepared the way—Hosea, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah. Not in the vengeance which through Hazael and Jehu was to sweep away the house of Omri, so much as in the discerning love which was to spare the seven thousand; not in the strong east wind that parted the Red Sea, or the fire that swept the top of Sinai, or the earthquake that shook down the walls of Jericho, would God be brought so near to man, as in the still small voice of the Child at Bethlehem, as in the ministrations of Him whose cry was not heard in the streets, in the awful stillness of the cross, in the never-failing order of Providence, in the silent, insensible influence of the good deeds and good words of God and of man. This is the predictive element of Elijah's prophecies. The history of the Church had made a vast stride since the days of Moses. Here we see, in an irresistible form, the true unity of the Bible. The sacred narrative rises above itself to a world hidden as yet from the view of those to whom the vision was revealed and by whom it was recorded. There is already a gospel of Elijah. He, the farthest removed of all the prophets from the evangelical spirit

and character, has yet enshrined in the heart of his story the most forcible of protests against the hardness of Judaism—the noblest anticipation of the breadth and depth of Christianity.

From this, the culminating point of Elijah's life, we are called abruptly to the renewal of his personal history and his relations with Ahab.

It is characteristic of the sacred history that the final doom of the dynasty of Omri should be called forth, not by its idolatry nor by its persecution of the prophets, but by an act of injustice to an individual, a private citizen.

On the eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel, immediately outside the walls, was a smooth plot of ground which Ahab, in his desire for the improvement of his favorite residence, wished to turn into a garden. But it belonged to Naboth, a Jezreelite of distinguished birth, who sturdily refused, perhaps with something of a religious scruple, to part with it for any price or equivalent: "Jehovah forbid that I should give to thee the inheritance of my fathers." The rights of an Israelite landowner were not to be despised. The land had descended to Naboth, possibly, from the first partition of the tribes. Omri, the father of Ahab, had given a great price for the hill of Samaria to its owner Shemer. David would not take the threshing-floor on Moriah, even from the heathen Araunah, without a payment. The refusal brought on a peculiar mood of sadness, described on two occasions in Ahab and in no one else. But in his palace there was one who cared nothing for the scruples which tormented the conscience even of the worst of the kings of Israel. In the pride of her conscious superiority to the weakness of her husband, "Jezebel came to him and said, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: *I* will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." It is the same contrast—true to nature—that we know so well in Ægisthus and Clytemnestra, in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, where the feebler resolution of the man has been urged to the

last crime by the bold and more relentless spirit of the woman. She wrote the warrant in Ahab's name; she gave the hint to the chiefs and nobles of the city. An assembly was called, at the head of which Naboth, by virtue of his high position, was placed. There, against him, as he so stood, the charge of treason was brought according to the forms of the Jewish law. The two or three necessary witnesses were produced and set before him. The sentence was pronounced. The whole family were involved in the ruin. Naboth and his sons, in the darkness of the night, were dragged out from the city. According to one account, the capital was the scene, and in the usual place of execution at Samaria, by the side of the great tank or pool (here as at Hebron) Naboth and his sons were stoned, and the blood from their mangled remains ran down into the reservoir and was licked up, on the broad margin of stone, by the ravenous dogs which infest an Eastern capital, and by the herds of swine which were not allowed to enter the Jewish city. "Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned and is dead." And she repeated to Ahab all that he cared to hear: "Naboth is not alive, but is dead." Then the pang of remorse shot through his heart. "When he heard that Naboth was dead, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth." But this was for the first moment only. From the capital of Samaria, as it would seem, he rose up and went down the steep descent which leads to the plain of Jezreel. He went in state, in his royal chariot. Behind him, probably in the same chariot, were two of the great officers of his court—Bidkar, and one whose name afterward bore a dreadful sound in the house of Ahab, Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. And now they neared the city of Jezreel; and now the green terraces appeared which Ahab at last might call his own, with no obstinate owner to urge against him the claims of law and of property; and there was the fatal vineyard, the vacant plot of ground, waiting for its new possessor. There is a solitary figure standing on the deserted ground, as though the dead Naboth had

risen from his bloody grave to warn off the king from his unlawful gains. It is Elijah. As in the most pathetic of Grecian dramas the unjust sentence has no sooner been pronounced on the unfortunate Antigone than Tiresias rises up to pronounce the curse on the Theban king, so in this grander than any Grecian tragedy the well-known prophet is there to utter the doom of the house of Ahab. He comes, we know not whence. He has arisen; he has come down at the word of the Lord to meet the king, as once before, in this second crisis of his life. Few and short were the words which fell from those awful lips, and they are variously reported. But they must have fallen like thunderbolts on that royal company. They were never forgotten. Years afterward, long after Ahab and Elijah had gone to their account, two of that same group found themselves once again on that same spot, and a king, the son of Ahab, lay dead at their feet, and Jehu turned to Bidkar and said, "Remember how that thou and I rode behind Ahab his father, when the Lord laid this burden upon him. Surely yesternight I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, saith Jehovah, and I will requite thee in this plat, saith Jehovah." And not only on that plat, but wherever the house of Ahab should be found, and wherever the blood of Naboth had left its traces, the decree of vengeance was pronounced; the horizon was darkened with the visions of vultures glutting on the carcasses of the dead, and the packs of savage dogs feeding on their remains or lapping up their blood. All these threats the youthful soldier heard, unconscious that he was to be their terrible executioner. But it was on Ahab himself that the curse fell with the heaviest weight. He burst at once into the familiar cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" The prophet and the king parted, to meet no more. But the king's last act was an act of penitence: on every anniversary of Naboth's death he wore the Eastern signs of mourning. And the prophet's words were words of mercy. It was as if the revelation of "the still small voice" was becoming clearer

and clearer. For in the heart of Ahab there was a sense of better things, and that sense is recognized and blessed.

It was three years afterward that the first part of Elijah's curse, in its modified form, fell on the royal house. The scene is given at length, apparently to bring before us the gradual working out of the catastrophe. The Syrian war, which forms the background of the whole of the history of Omri's dynasty, furnishes the occasion. To recover the fortress of Ramoth-Gilead is the object of the battle. The kings of Judah and Israel are united for the grand effort. The alliance is confirmed by the marriage of Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, with Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. The names of the two royal families are intermixed for the first time since the separation of the kingdoms. Jehoshaphat comes down in state to Samaria. A grand sacrificial feast for him and his suite is prepared. The two kings—an unprecedented sight—sit side by side, each on his throne, in full pomp, in the wide open space before the gateway of Samaria. Once again, though in a less striking form, is repeated the conflict between the true and false prophesyings, as at Carmel. Four hundred prophets of Baal, yet evidently professing the worship of Jehovah, and Israelites, not foreigners—all, in one mystic chorus, urged the war. Only one exception was heard to the general acclamation—not Elijah, but one who, according to Jewish tradition, had once before foretold the fall of Ahab—Micaiah, the son of Imlah.

In the battle that follows under the walls of Ramoth-Gilead everything centres on this foredoomed destruction of Ahab. All his precautions are baffled. Early in the day, an arrow, which tradition ascribed to the hand of Naaman, pierced the king's breastplate. He felt his death-wound, but, with a nobler spirit than had appeared in his life, he would not have it disclosed, lest the army should be discouraged. The tide of battle rose higher and higher till nightfall. The Syrian army retired to the fortress. Then, and not till then, as the sun went down, did the

herald of the army proclaim, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country," *for the king is dead.*

The long-expected event had indeed arrived. The king, who had stood erect in the chariot till that moment, sank down dead. His body was carried home to the royal burial-place in Samaria. But the manner of his end left its traces in a form not to be mistaken. The blood which all through that day had been flowing from his wound had covered both the armor in which he was dressed and the chariot in which he had stood for so many hours. The chariot—perhaps the armor—was washed in state. But the bystanders remembered that the blood, shed as it had been on the distant battle-field, streamed into the same waters which had been polluted by the blood of Naboth and his sons, and was lapped up from the margin by the same dogs and swine still prowling round the spot, and that when the abandoned outcasts of the city—probably those who had assisted in the profligate rites of the temple of Ashtaroth—came, according to their shameless usage, for their morning bath in the pool, they found it red with the blood of the apostate king of Israel. So were accomplished the warnings of Elijah and Micaiah.

With the fall of Ahab a series of new characters appear on the eventful scene. Elijah still remained for a time, but only to make way for successors. In the meeting of the four hundred prophets at Samaria he was not present. In the reign of Ahaziah and of Jehoram he appears but for a moment. There was a letter—the only written prophecy ascribed to him, and the only link which connected him with the history of Judah—addressed to the young prince who reigned with his father Jehoshaphat at Jerusalem. There was a sudden apparition of a strange being, on the heights of Carmel, to the messengers whom Ahaziah had sent to consult an oracle in Philistia. They were passing, probably, along the "haunted strand" between the sea and the mountain. They heard the warning voice. They returned to their master. Their description could only apply to one man: it must

be the wild prophet of the desert whom he had heard described by his father and grandfather. Troop after troop was sent to arrest the enemy of the royal house—to seize the lion in his den. On the top of Carmel they saw the solitary form. But he was not to be taken by human force; stroke after stroke of celestial fire was to destroy the armed bands before he descended from the rocky height and delivered his message to the dying king. It was to this act, some centuries afterward, not far from the same spot, that the two ardent youths appealed, and provoked that divine rebuke which places the whole career of Elijah in its fitting place, as something in its own nature transitory, precursive, preparatory.

Another was now to take his place. The time was come when "the Lord would take Elijah into heaven by a tempest." Those long wanderings were now over. No more was that awful figure to be seen on Carmel nor that stern voice heard in Jezreel. For the last time he surveyed, from the heights of the western Gilgal, the whole scene of his former career—the Mediterranean Sea, Carmel and the distant hills of Gilead—and went the round of the consecrated haunts of Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho. One faithful disciple was with him—the son of Shaphat, whom he at first called on his way from Sinai to Damascus, and who, after the manner of Eastern attendants, stood by him to pour water over his hands in his daily ablutions. With that tenderness which is sometimes blended with the most rugged natures, at each successive halt the older prophet turned to his youthful companion and entreated him to stay: "Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel, . . . to Jericho, . . . to Jordan." But in each case Elisha replied with an asseveration that expressed his undivided and unshaken trust in his master and his master's God: "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At Bethel and at Jericho the students in the schools that had gathered round those sacred spots came out with the sad presentiment that for the last time they were to see

the revered instructor who had given new life to their studies, and they turned to their fellow-disciple: "Knowest thou not that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And to every such remonstrance he replied, with emphasis, "Yea, *I* know it; hold ye your peace." No dread of that final parting could deter him from the mournful joy of seeing with his own eyes the last moments, of hearing with his own ears the last words, of the prophet of God. "And they two went on." They went on alone. They descended the long weary slopes that lead from Jericho to the Jordan. On the upper terraces, or on the mountain-heights behind the city, stood "afar off," in awe, fifty of the young disciples, "and they two stood by Jordan." They stood by its rushing stream, but they were not to be detained by even its barrier. "The aged Gileadite cannot rest till he again sets foot on his own side of the river." He ungirds the rough mantle from around his shaggy frame; he "rolled it together" as if into a wonder-working staff; he "smote" the turbid river as though it were a living enemy, and the "waters divided hither and thither, and they two went over on dry ground." And now they were on that farther shore, under the shade of those hills of Pisgah and of Gilead, where, in former times, a prophet greater even than Elijah had been withdrawn from the eyes of his people —whence, in his early youth, Elijah himself had descended in his august career. He knew that his hour was come; he knew that he had at last returned home; that he was to go whither Moses had gone before him; and he turned to Elisha to ask for his last wish. One only gift was in Elisha's mind to ask: "I pray thee, let a double portion"—if it be only two morsels, two-thirds—"of thy spirit be upon me," the right of the first-born son.

It was a hard thing that to be asked, but it was granted on one condition. If he was able to retain to the end the same devoted perseverance, and keep his eye set and steadfast on the departing prophet, the gift would be his. "And as they still

went on"—upward, it may be, toward the eastern hills, talking as they went—"behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder." This was the severance of the two friends.

Then came a furious storm. "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." In this inextricable interweaving of fact and figure, it is enough to mark how fitly such an act closes such a life. "My father, my father," Elisha cried, "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." So Elijah had stood a sure defence to his country against all the chariots and horsemen that were ever pouring in upon them from the surrounding nations. So he now seemed, when he passed away, lost in the flames of the steeds and the car that swept him from the earth, as in the fire of his own unquenchable spirit—in the fire which had thrice blazed around him in his passage through his troubled earthly career. And as in its fiery force and energy, so in its mystery, the end corresponded to the beginning. He had appeared in the history we know not whence, and now he is gone in like manner. As of Moses, so of Elijah—"no man knoweth his sepulchre; no man knoweth his resting-place until this day." On some lonely peak or in some deep ravine the sons of the prophets vainly hoped to find him, cast away by the breath of the Lord, as in former times: "And they sought him three days, but found him not." He was gone, no more to be seen by mortal eyes, or, if ever again, only in far distant ages, when his earthly likeness should once again appear in that same sacred region, or when, on the summit of "a high mountain apart, by themselves," three disciples, like Elisha, should be gathered round a Master whose departure they were soon expecting, "and there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him." The ascension or assumption of Elijah stands out alone in the Jewish history as the highest representation of the end of a great and good career; of death as seen under its noblest aspect—as the completion and crown of the life which had preceded it—as the mysterious

shrouding of the departed within the invisible world. By a sudden stroke of storm and whirlwind, or, as we may almost literally say of the martyrs of old, by chariots and horses of fire, the servants of God pass away. We know not where they rest; we may search high and low, in the height of the highest peak of our speculations, or in the depths of the darkest shadow of the valley of death. Legend upon legend may gather round them, as upon Elijah, but the sacred record itself is silent. One only mode or place there is where we may think of them, as of Elijah —in those who come afterward in their power and spirit, or in that one Presence which still brings us near to them, in the Mount of Transfiguration, in communion with the beloved of God.



# XXIII.

## ELISHA.

THE close of the career of Elijah is the beginning of the career of Elisha. It had been when he was ploughing, with a vast array of oxen before him, in the rich pastures of the Jordan valley, that Elijah swept past him. Without a word he had stripped off the rough mantle of his office and thrown it over the head of the wondering youth. Without a moment's delay he had stalked on as if he had done nothing. But Elisha had rushed after the prophet, and had obtained the playful permission to return for a farewell to his father and mother in a solemn sacrificial feast, and had then followed him ever since. He had seen his master to the end; he had uttered a loud scream of grief as he saw him depart; he had rent asunder his own garments, as in mourning for the dead. The mantle which fell from Elijah was now his. From that act and those words has been drawn the figure of speech which has passed into a proverb for the succession of the gifts of gifted men. It is one of the representations by which, in the Roman Catacombs, the early Christians consoled themselves for the loss of their departed friends. With the mantle he descends once more to the Jordan-stream and wields it in his hand. The waters (so one version of the text represents the scene) for a moment hesitate: "they divided not." He invokes the aid of Him to whose other holy names he adds the new epithet of "The God of Elijah;" and then the waters "part hither and thither," and he passes over

and is in his own native region. In the western valley of the Jordan, in the gardens and groves of Jericho, now fresh from its recent restoration, he takes up his abode, as "the lord" of his new disciples. They see at once that "the spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha," and they "bow themselves to the ground before him."

From the earliest times the city of Jericho is associated with some of the most remarkable displays of a special providence, and of the divine blessing as accompanying a special people. The plain of Jericho, in which the city lay, is one extending for many miles—from Scythopolis to the bay of the Dead Sea. It is encircled by ridges of rugged, barren mountains. The ancient city was situated to the north-east of Jerusalem about twenty miles, and six from the river Jordan. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was through these desolate mountain-passes and deep defiles—in all ages a most dangerous way, infested by banditti of the worst character. With beautiful appropriateness our Saviour spake the instructive parable of the good Samaritan in reference to this very hazardous road, showing not only what was too common in it—robbery with cruelty—but also the still greater necessity for assistance, and the true human sympathy of him who aided the injured traveler, as well as, in more condemnatory contrast, the hard-heartedness both of the priest and Levite.

It must have been a solemn spectacle, that of a whole people carrying the ark, the visible symbol of their covenant relation to their present and all-powerful God, marching for seven days in order around the city of Jericho, once every day for six days, and seven times on the last day, with no sound but the rough music of the rams' horns, accompanying it on the seventh day with a shout from the whole multitude, when immediately the city walls fell to the ground, and every man entered at the place opposite to him. The city, by divine appointment, being doomed, they set fire to it, consecrating all the gold, silver and brass, and from

amongst its inhabitants saving only Rahab and her family, because of her kindness to the spies. Joshua pronounced on it an anathema, not only as it then stood, but on him who should, on the same site, attempt to rebuild it. Very remarkably this was fulfilled. Hiel of Bethel, five hundred and thirty-seven years afterward, restored the city. At the laying of its foundations he lost his eldest son, Abiram, and when the gates were hung, his youngest son, Segub.

Another Jericho, however, was erected a short time after Joshua's destruction of the former. It stood in the same plain, and is that which, in the Book of Judges, is called "a city of palm trees." Here the ambassadors of King David remained after they had been maltreated by the Ammonites, till their beards were grown again, and near to it the prophet Elisha sweetened the waters. It is worthy of remark that Josephus mentions a plentiful spring whose streams made the fruits of the earth and of the trees to decay, and was also injurious to health; but being cured by Elisha, they were rendered as useful as they had been formerly deleterious. Elisha goes to Jericho to remain in the school of the prophets till he receives the commands of the Lord. God's servants are they who wait to know and to do his will. He is soon recognized as the successor of Elijah. What they could not ask of the one prophet—for they feared him—they had no difficulty in asking of the other. Here the milder and more attractive radiance of Elisha shines forth. The deputation that waited upon him from the city represent in few words its true condition—the situation as pleasant, but the ground as barren and the waters as bad. And what could possibly be worse? The most common of all God's mercies is water, and often the most despised. Still, what is a town or city without it but a scene of discomfort, disease and death? The fertility of the soil depends largely on the quantity and quality of water, whilst most assuredly it is Heaven's gift to man, both for his happiness and health. Would that men knew better its value,

and saw God's hand more plainly in this and in every gift of his beneficent and wonder-working providence!

The request of the deputation from Jericho to Elisha was the voice of humanity—a voice which no prophet of the Lord ever heedlessly disregarded. "Bring me," says he, "a new cruse, and put salt therein." It was fetched. Observe, the "cruse" must be "new" and filled with salt. Away the prophet hastens toward the waters; nor does he tarry till he reaches the fountain. Not in the running stream, but in the spring, does he cast the salt. And taking no honor to himself, as a mere instrument, however much others contemplated his work with gratitude, he gives all the glory to God, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day." What a change must have been produced by this one act of mercy! No day could pass without a remembrance of the prophet, and no reaping season could return without a recurrence to his miraculous interference.

But what a lesson of life does the miracle exhibit! It is salt which is used to heal the waters. The gospel is salt; by it men are kept from corruption and are purified. There is no other cure; and the salt must be cast into the spring. Had the prophet healed the waters only as they ran in their accustomed channels, the sweet would again have given place to those that were bitter, flowing from the unchanged fountain. But no; the spring itself must be healed. How often men resolve that their lives shall be reformed! Some sudden providence, some afflictive bereavement, some stirring sermon, brings about a temporary change. Old haunts are deserted; old habits are suspended; they seem new characters. Alas! it is soon to return to their former ways, the good gone, and their last state even worse than the first. And why is this? The reformation was merely outward—the heart was still the same; the waters of the stream were sweetened, but the fountain was still bitter. So is it with

all external reformations. What is needed is a new heart, and then will quickly follow a new life. This is possessed alone in the "new way" of the gospel, in Jesus the Saviour, set forth by the "new cruse;" this is produced by the truth of the gospel, typified by the "salt;" this is wrought by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of gospel means, shown in the prophet speaking in the Lord's name, accompanied by divine power; and this is evidenced in a complete and lasting change of life, from sin to holiness, even as the waters of Jericho were transformed from bitter to sweet, from engendering disease and barrenness to occasioning health and fertility.

Elisha had not long to tarry at Jericho. He must go and do the work of God in other parts. A lasting boon had he conferred on the city and the plain, with which to this day his name is associated and the well shown. A prophet's mission is not all mercy. There must be darkness as well as light, or light will cease to be valued. The very judgments of God are mercies, though men do not so understand them. The discipline of a school must be strict when that is required, and gentle and encouraging where timidity keeps from a healthful development. The world is God's college, and, like a wise father, he instructs his people by a smile or a frown, just as their condition demands. As the prophet proceeds to Mount Carmel, he passes through Bethel. Who can mention Bethel without a remembrance both of Jacob's vision and his God? Now, however, Jehovah is forgotten, and his altars deserted by its inhabitants. This was one of the cities dedicated to the worship of the golden calves set up by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. No sooner was the prophet of the Lord recognized as he came near to the city than he was assailed by a multitude of profane "young men," called in our translation "little children"—a designation often given to grown persons who exhibit childish folly. They came forth and mocked him. "Go up, thou bald head! go up, thou bald head!" was their iniquitous cry. The phrase "go up" had an obvious reference

to Elijah's translation, and implied their detestation of his successor, and their desire that, like him, he might betake himself from the earth; and the epithet "bald head" was most insulting, as referring to that description of baldness produced by leprosy, and esteemed in the East most ignominious. The indignant prophet considered their conduct as showing how the inhabitants of the city preferred their false gods and false prophets to the God of Israel and his servants, and resented it. They must be punished, that their parents and relatives, with the whole city, may be made to fear. He "turned round and cursed them in the name of the Lord." The wicked are caught in their own wickedness; and immediately "two she-bears came forth out of the woods and tare forty and two of them"—"tare" them meaning, as the original word implies, "grievously lacerating and wounding them;" thus teaching the people of Bethel, as Dr. Waterland remarks, "to train up their children, in future, to good manners and the fear of God, and, for the present, they might see how God detested scoffers and mockers, and what reverence he expected to be paid to his commissioned prophets."

It is a serious matter to have to do with the servants of the Most High. Commissioned by him to accomplish his work, he sends none a warfare on their own charges. He is both their shield and their sun, their protector and provider. Nothing can be more ruinous than the course which some parents pursue before their children. They have scarcely a kind or generous word to utter concerning Christian ministers. They fill their minds full of prejudices both against the Lord's servants and their work, and then wonder how they are not impressed and affected by the solemn verities to which, from time to time, they listen. This conduct is as destructive to the souls of the young as the tearing of the bears was to the bodies of the "little children" of Bethel. It ought to be guarded against with all the holy jealousy which the love of heaven can inspire and with all the abhorrent dread which the fear of hell can create; whilst

young people should ever remember this history, learning from it to respect age, to reverence truth, to honor the servants of the Most High, to learn from them, not to mock them; to follow them in their faith and piety, not to jeer at their infirmities or pour contempt upon their kindness.

A striking change in the name "Bethel" may here be noted. It was called by the Hebrews who adhered to the house of David and the worship of Jehovah, Bethaven; the former name meaning "the house of God;" the latter, "the house of iniquity." This arose from the idolatry of the inhabitants of Bethel. Onward, Elisha, from this Bethaven! Let the mothers weep; let the fathers talk and think; let the young mockers tremble, believe and bow before Him whom prophets serve! This is not a place at which to tarry. Elisha must go on to Carmel. He hastens thither. Well can he meditate there. There his master conquered idolatry and set it at naught before all the people. The scene and its associations strengthen faith, quicken spiritual life, cherish hope and lead to renewed service. For a season, at Carmel the prophet rests.

## THE WAR WITH MOAB—A POOR WIDOW—THE WOMAN OF SHUNEM.

It is now stirring times in Israel. Preparations are being made for war. The country, from one end to the other, is awakened before the summons of its king. The military spirit is by far the most easily aroused in fallen human nature, man's antagonism to man, his love of glory, his desire for conquest and his lust for power being passions always too freely nurtured in the bosom of our common depravity. Very fearful in every aspect is war, yet its concomitants of tinseled habiliments, gaudy equipages, martial music and mighty feats of prowess have lent to it in all ages a terrible charm, moving the inmost soul of the young and daring, and rendering to the most reckless acts an appearance of lawful and honorable pre-eminence. Happy that

day when men shall learn the art of war no more! but, alas! its dawn is still distant.

The occasion of this Israelitish war was a justifiable one, according to the common estimate in such matters. The king of Moab, from the days of David, had been tributary, paying annually a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams, with the wool, to the kings of Israel. This they now refuse, and the soldiers of Israel "put on steel to recover their cloth." Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, unites in this campaign with the king of Israel, as did also the king of Edom, whose sovereignty at that time was subject to Judah. This alliance was natural, inasmuch as there now existed the most cordial friendship between Jehoshaphat and Jehoram, as well as from the Moabites having previously united with the Syrians against Judah. Israel, too, had partially reformed itself, under its present king, from idolatry—at least so as to render their case more hopeful in the eyes of the good Jehoshaphat. The armies gather; they are to march through Edom in order to encompass Moab; the kings are in the camp; homes and kindred are left behind, and quickly they reach the sterile desert.

Elisha, the year after he had gone to Mount Carmel, appears to have spent a portion of time in Samaria. Such a movement in the country as that which was now occurring was not likely to be overlooked by him. How it came to pass that he was at this period near to the army is not recorded; but where he is needed, there he is providentially found. That King Jehoshaphat should lead his army into the desert of Edom without first consulting his God is an oversight to be loudly condemned. Jehoram does not appear to regard the guidance of Jehovah. It is an act of true piety, however, having neglected a duty, as speedily as possible to repair the evil. The whole army was now suffering fearful hardships from want of water. What could be done? Were the Moabites to come upon them in their present condition, they must be scattered and perish. What are the

most skillful commanders, what the noblest equipments, what the most powerful batteries, if the numerous forces are paralyzed by cold or conquered by heat? Monarchs and their armies must be taught that "all the springs are in God." With parched lips and burning throats, the three kings confer together in the camp. Jehoram deplores their condition, but Jehoshaphat inquires for a prophet of the Lord; the one sighs in his misery, but the other asks in faith. Means which are despised in prosperity are welcomed in the hour of adversity. The advice of the king of Judah is adopted, and a prophet is sought.

How numerous are the instances in which the people of God are instructed that "man's extremity is God's opportunity"! Never did this more fully appear than on the present occasion. Inquiry is set on foot for a prophet. One of the attendants of Jehoram, unlike his master, who knew Elijah, and was also now acquainted with the dwelling of Elisha and with the relation which the latter had borne to the former prophet, instantly replies, "Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." Well was he known to Jehoshaphat, and fully did he recognize as with him the Spirit of the Lord. The three kings go down to the humble prophet. How much is the possession of wisdom beyond the possession of wealth! These three sovereigns place themselves at the feet of this lowly saint.

The presence of Jehoram is offensive to Elisha. The patron of sin ought never to receive any sanction to his wickedness from the minister of salvation. If the sufferings of a sinner bring him for help to a believer, he must be told his state as well as relieved from his wretchedness. The king of Israel pleads not with the prophet in his own name, but in the name of his allies, and especially in that of the king of Judah. Personally he is rebuked, and that with much fidelity; but his plea is admitted, and Elisha replies, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand; surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see

thee." Plain and painful words are these for the ears of a king, and such as the mere courtiers both of the past ages and of the present would shudder to address to those in power; but the prophets were faithful men, and cared more for the favor of God than for the strongest arm of flesh. Bold as was Elijah, not less so was his successor. But in the presence of Jehoram the prophet's heart is troubled; the Spirit of the Lord has never dwelt with discord; if he is to be informed of the will of God regarding that of which he was now consulted, his mind must be calmed, his spirit soothed, and his whole frame be reduced into a condition of patient waiting at the divine footstool.

We have elsewhere referred to the custom in the schools of the prophets of cultivating music. Who has not felt the influence of melodious harmony in rendering the soul devotional? Elisha requires a minstrel; one is immediately brought. Wrapped in his mantle, abstracted from the gaze of kings or people, the prophet lends his soul to the sweet sounds now falling on his ear. He tarries not long before he receives a visit from his God; every eye fixed, the kings and their attendants anxiously awaiting the issue, quickly the prophet rises from his seat. The minstrel ceases; Elisha points to the surrounding valley, and commands, saying, "Make it full of ditches." No wind shall blow, no rain shall fall, yet that valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink, both you and your cattle. Not only so, for this is a light matter with the Lord; your enemies shall fall by your hands; their fenced cities shall become a ruin; their wells of water shall be filled up; their defeat shall be complete. But this shall not be to-night. Water shall be given you to-morrow, at the time of the morning sacrifice. There is still a God in Israel to serve.

The exercise of faith in the Lord is the highest act as well as the surest evidence of true religion. Such confidence in seasons of prosperity is well pleasing; much more in times of trouble. And as the greater the trial, the stronger the faith, so is it all the

more honoring to the Most High. Sovereigns and soldiers in the desert of Edom, sorely suffering from thirst, must wait all the evening, all the night, till the Lord's appointed time. Elijah's prayer was answered, and his offering was burnt up, at the time of the evening sacrifice; Elisha's prophecy is accomplished, and the ditches are filled with water at the time of the morning sacrifice. God has instituted services, and commanded them to be performed at appointed seasons. No great or good work can be done without order and regularity. When the people pray, then the refreshing waters of the sanctuary flow. So now, scarcely had the morning oblation been offered before springs gush forth in the desert and fill up every open ditch; the people drink, the army is refreshed, the arm of the Lord is revealed, and the word of the prophet is fulfilled. Who amongst those thousands can ever again forget the power and mercy of Jehovah? And yet how soon our past sufferings cease to be remembered when health is restored!

The enemies of the kings, meanwhile, were alive to their approach, and were preparing to meet them. The rising mists, occasioned by the burning rays of the sun falling upon these miraculous supplies of water, were misunderstood by the scouts sent forth to reconnoitre the hosts of Israel and Judah. The streams in the ditches, through the haze, assume the appearance of pools of blood. The Moabites imagine that the allies had fallen out amongst themselves, and that in the dispute many had fallen. Now was the moment for them to strike. They press forward to the attack. Civil broils give just advantage to the common foe. Nothing can be worse than the falling out of friends at the moment when the enemy of both pursues. Under this deception the Moabites hurry forward and furiously rush into the ranks of the united forces arrayed against them. When too late, they discover their mistake. The conflict is short, the slaughter is terrible. The hosts of Moab betake themselves to flight; they are followed, multitudes are slain, their cities are

destroyed, their wells are filled up, their trees are felled, their lands are marred, desolation covers their borders. One remaining onslaught completes the campaign. The king of Moab, with seven hundred resolute followers, rushes against the Edomites. He is repulsed, with a disastrous loss, when, either from anger at his destiny, or willing by the most costly offering to appease his cruel gods, he sacrifices, before all Israel and by his own hand, his eldest son. What slaves men are who are led by blind superstition! There is no greater tyrant than the prince of darkness. Horrified at the sight, the men of Israel and Judah return to their own homes. Every word spoken by the prophet was fulfilled.

It has been truly said that reality is far more affecting than fiction. The death of the son of the king of Moab as a sacrifice shocked the stern soldiers more than the sight of all the heaps of slain who fell in battle. Descriptions of personal trials come more home to our hearts and sympathies than any of a merely general character. The tale of the individual is more thrilling than the history of the million. Away from the war against the Moabites, Elisha now finds sorrow in the circle of the prophets. Those holy men were not too holy to be married or to enjoy family comforts. But one of their number had died, leaving a widow and two sons, and he had died in debt. During such reigns as that of Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram, it is no matter of astonishment that both the priests and prophets of the Lord should be in difficulties; but they shall not be forsaken by their Master when deserted by the kings, his vicegerents. The widow, in her distress, comes to Elisha. Her husband's creditor threatens to seize her sons and sell them for slaves. The mother's heart is lacerated—the widow's soul is smitten; but "God is the husband of the widow and the father of the fatherless." All she had in her possession was "a pot of oil"—valuable to her in her poverty, but nothing to meet her necessities. The Lord would have no human being a slave, and no servant of his an unnecessary suf-

ferer. The prophet shall relieve and enrich the widow. "She must be a debtor for more," as Bishop Hall remarks, "that her debts may become less." She must borrow from all her neighbors to pay all her creditors. She must borrow the vessels—God multiplies the oil. A large number are lent her; the oil is poured out, and there is more than enough to fill them all. She sells the oil, pays the debt, saves her sons from slavery, and has a goodly allowance left behind.

Spectacle after spectacle of domestic trial and triumph, engrossing our most tender affections, fills up the mission of Elisha. Traveling from one part to another, doing and making known the Lord's will, "it fell on a day" that he entered Shunem. In this city of Issachar there dwelt a lady who is described as a "great (or wealthy) woman." As the prophet passed her house, she constrained him to come in and share her hospitality. This was the beginning of their friendship; it became intimate, insomuch that "as oft as he passed by he turned in thither to eat bread." It was after one of these occasions that this kind-hearted Shunammite, affected by the excellence of the prophet, proposed to her husband to erect on the wall "a prophet's chamber," and to furnish it, so that whenever Elisha came that way he might have a home. The husband readily complied, and often did "the man of God" find in that lowly room a resting-place for his weary feet in the days of his pious pilgrimage. Never yet has kindness shown to the servants of the Most High gone unrewarded. There is One who forgets not "the cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple." Nor did "the woman of Shunem" lose her reward. Grateful for great attention, on one occasion Elisha sends his servant Gehazi to inquire of her what he could do for her. Her reply bespeaks her character. "She lived," she said, "among her own people," intimating that she had what she wished, and was satisfied with what she had. Gehazi reminded his master that she was childless. The hint was taken: the Shunammitish woman was called;

she was informed that she will have a child; and in due time she became the happy mother of a son.

How often it happens that our most precious mercies become the sources of our sorest trials! Children are both great comforts and great cares. What anxiety encircles their infancy! what watchfulness their childhood! what concern their increasing years! and when they reach maturity, to possess evidences of their piety and to see them respectably situated in life, many a prayerful season and sleepless hour registers the extent of parental regard and the weight of parental responsibility. And trial soon came to the widow through her son. "When he was grown," having gone into the fields where his father's reapers were engaged, he was seized with illness, so that he was obliged to cry out, "My head! my head!" He was carried home, but it was to die. Whither, oh whither, shall the afflicted mother betake herself in her sorrow?—whither but to "the man of God"? To him she hastens. She is seen by him whilst yet distant. He sends Gehazi to inquire the occasion of her visit, and whether all was well. Knowing that whatever happens under God must be right, she answers, "It is well." Next moment she is at the prophet's feet, tells him her trial, and prays him to return with her; nor will she leave him to come by himself. Her importunity prevails; they proceed together, and, behold, the child is dead. The prophet enters his chamber, where lay the youth, calls upon his God, stretches himself upon the child, and restores him to life. Immediately the anxious mother is summoned, her son is given to her, and, after an outburst of maternal gratitude uttered at Elisha's feet, she arose and retired.

What a work was that in which those luminaries of the world, in the early days of its history, were so constantly engaged! True, they had fearful judgments to announce, painful seasons to anticipate; but their mission was not all concerning "wrath to come." They brought joy to many a sorrowful bosom, light into many a dark dwelling. They went about continually doing

good. Witness Elisha. To enter Jericho and receive the blessings of its grateful inhabitants; to visit the prophet's widow and to find her happy with her sons; to mingle songs of praise with those of the woman of Shunem, on his frequent visits to "the prophet's chamber," over her "son who was lost and is found," —these, as viewed simply in themselves, were events sufficient to cheer a lifetime of toil and care. But when they are regarded as evidences of a higher call and holier work, they assume an aspect of unspeakable moment. They proclaim to all the divine mission to which Elisha was appointed; so also did his service on behalf of the armies of Judah, Edom and Israel. From one end of it to the other, the land must have rung with the report of the prophet's doings—a glorious testimony to the presence of the prophet's God. This is the consummation of the loftiest aspirations of every true minister of the Most High. Let there be multiplied instances of usefulness, but let all redound to the divine glory. Let the people be warned and taught, encouraged and kept in the right way; amidst judgments and blessings God must be all in all.

## ELISHA AT GILGAL—DEATH IN THE POT—THE LOST HATCHET.

Elisha appears to have visited, in rotation or as occasion required, the schools of the prophets in different localities. Four years having elapsed, we now find him at Gilgal; it was during a season of great dearth. The sons of the prophets suffered in common with the rest of the inhabitants. Gehazi is required to prepare for them their simple meal of herbs. It happened that "one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds, his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage, for they knew them not." This "wild vine" was the colocynth, so called from the shape of its leaves and the climbing nature of its stems; it is remarkable for its bitter taste and violent purgative qualities, being a strong

poison if it is taken in large quantities and unqualified by any other mixture. It was at once discovered, when tasted, that there was some disagreeable and deleterious ingredient in the broth, and with one accord the sons of the prophets, looking to Elisha, exclaimed, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" The prophet hesitates not for a moment; what he knew not by learning he receives by revelation; it is mixed with meal, the bitter is assuaged, the poison is counteracted and the evil is cured. But the painful season of want continued. In this extremity God moves the heart of a man of Baalshalisha, who brings of the first-fruits to the prophet a most welcome gift—"twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk." Here we have a collateral evidence (as indeed we have in other parts of Scripture) to the fact that the majority of those who resided in those schools of Israel and Judah belonged to the tribe of Levi, and were therefore largely sustained by the free-will offerings of the people. But what were a few loaves and a few ears of corn to feed so many? He who yearly multiplies the handful of seed and sends the harvest can also increase abundantly this supply. Nor was this blessing withheld in this season of trial. They are placed before the people. God's promise to his servant is fulfilled, and "they ate and left thereof." How securely may the faith of the Lord's people rest on the promise, "Thy bread shall be certain, and thy water shall be sure"!

Our attention must now be drawn to an interesting incident strikingly indicative of Elisha's regard to justice as well as generosity. The dwellings of the prophets were "too strait for them," and they wished to enlarge them toward the Jordan. Engaged in cutting wood for the purpose, one of their number let an axe fall into the water; the sorrow of the man's heart, however, was not simply because of the loss he had sustained, but because the axe was borrowed. The prophet highly appreciated his feelings; and casting a piece of wood into the water where

the hatchet had fallen, the iron swam and rose to the surface, so that it was restored to him again. How often, in small matters as much as in more important affairs, both the presence and interference of God, as well as the upright character of his servants, are made manifest! Referring to the swimming of iron, a curious prediction is mentioned by Dr. Gutzlaff, the late eminent Chinese missionary, as having been handed down for ages amongst the inhabitants of Siam and China, that "when iron swims, there will come from the West toward the East a religion which shall destroy all others, and establish itself for ever." And when iron steamboats were first seen in the Chinese seas, the people on the shore shouted, "The time has come! iron swims! the religion of the West must conquer!" God, in his inscrutable providence, appears now to be fulfilling this tradition. All China, so long sealed up from intercourse with other lands, is being thrown open. The truth is being professed by multitudes, idolatry is shaken to its centre, and events seem to encourage the hope that this nation, consisting of more than three hundred and sixty-seven millions of human beings, will be "born in a day." May the fervent prayers of the Churches for this consummation be answered and their best hopes be realized!

## THE GREAT FAMINE—ELISHA'S DEATH—HIS ASHES, AND HIS EXCELLENCE.

Nothing is so remarkable to a careful reader of the times of the prophets as the disregard which was shown both to the wonderful doings of God and to his servants, alike by kings and subjects. No time was allowed to elapse without the people being taught that the Lord was God in Israel; and yet so great was the attachment of the tribes to their froward courses that they were continually returning to idolatry. Many were the severe afflictions which their rebellion cost them, but they seemed willing to suffer for the sake of sin. No wonder that at last they were forsaken and scattered.

As the life of Elisha draws near its close, several circumstances of deep interest invite attention. Naaman had not long returned to his country before war broke out between Israel and Syria. During the struggle the king of the latter country was sorely perplexed, having been thwarted in all his designs. The king of Israel was made acquainted with his most secret purposes. The Syrian monarch imagined that there must be treachery in his council, and demanded that all who were attached to the interests of his enemy should immediately confess. At once the reply was, "None, my lord, O king! but Elisha the prophet, that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." The fame of Elisha had doubtless spread far and wide, through his miraculous cure of Naaman; and indeed it was he who had informed Jehoram of the movements and purposes of the Syrians, by a knowledge of which they were outwitted and overcome. The rage of Benhadad, the king of Syria, against Elisha, knew no bounds. He determined to seize him; and hearing that he was at Dothan, a town in the tribe of Manasseh, he sent a strong force to take him prisoner and bring him to Damascus. The town was surrounded by night; and when the prophet's servant awoke, early in the morning, and saw their condition, in despair he cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Undaunted in spirit, unshaken in confidence, Elisha replied, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The eyes of the servant were opened, and, "behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The Syrians were smitten with blindness, and were unconsciously led by the prophet to Samaria. Jehoram was inclined to put them all to death; but the prophet whom they came to injure was he who generously saved them alive, caused them to be hospitably treated, and in peace sent them back to their master.

More fearful than war, more destructive than pestilence, is famine. This is shown in the death-records of many a land and

in the thrilling annals of many a city. But to be afflicted with all three—war, famine and pestilence! Indeed, pestilence and famine generally journey together. Samaria was now suffering from a long and heartrending siege; Israel, from a seven years' famine; and to such a condition had Samaria been reduced that "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver." Nay, contrary to every feeling of nature, and compelled by the frightful cravings of hunger, a woman had killed and eaten of her own child. This fact reached the king's ears; it clothed him with sackcloth and filled him with sadness; and because Elisha had not interceded with God for the city and rescued it from the power of the Syrians, he threatened his life. But the power of Jehovah was no sooner desired than it was displayed. During the night the Syrians were made to hear the sound as of a mighty army; they imagined that the Hittites and Egyptians had come up against them, and in affright they fled, leaving behind them their tents and all their stores. Four wretched lepers, who sat by the gates of the city ready to die, and who determined to place themselves in the hands of the Syrians, went to their tents, and finding them empty, communicated the joyful tidings to the Samaritans. Sorrow gave place to joy, hunger to a rich repast; the prophet was not only spared, but honored, and the hand of the Lord was recognized in the deliverance.

"Use hospitality" is the short but comprehensive law of Christian neighborhood, enjoined upon his followers by their Lord. So, at least, he inspired his distinguished apostle, Paul, to inculcate. In the fulfillment of this precept, men have "entertained angels unawares." An angel of mercy to the woman of Shunem was Elisha, to whom she had shown no little kindness. When the seven years' famine commenced, he recommended her to take up her abode with her son amongst the Philistines. She was thus saved from many hardships, but one result was that during her absence her property was confiscated. His name, even here, stands in good stead. On her return, and discovering her property

in the hands of others, she went to make her appeal to the king. Happily for her, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was then talking with Jehoram. He had been telling him of all the mighty works which his master had done, and "how he had restored a dead body to life." As they conversed she drew nigh. Gehazi introduced her to the king as the Shunammite whose son Elisha had revived. She made known her circumstances; the king inquired into her history, and ordered that "all that was hers, and all the fruit of the field since the day that she had left the land even until now," be returned to her and her family.

He who could not be taken to Damascus by force went thither of his own accord. Benhadad, his former enemy, was sick; and when the king heard of his arrival, he sent Hazael with a rich present of every good thing of Damascus, even forty camels' burden, to give to the prophet. He inquired concerning his master's illness. Elisha replied that he might recover, but that he would surely die. He fixed his eyes steadfastly on Hazael till he wept. He asked the cause. The prophet, foreseeing that he was to reign over Syria and become a fearful enemy of Israel, informed Hazael of what he should do. Indignant, he replied, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" But, as Mr. Jay once remarked, "the dog did it." Next day Hazael took the life of Benhadad and reigned in his stead, and, as Elisha had foretold, carried dreadful havoc into the towns and cities of Israel.

At the command of Elisha, Jehu was anointed king of Israel by one of the sons of the prophets. Jehoram had been gathered to his fathers, and Joram also, his brother, was slain. Alas! Elisha himself "fell sick of the sickness whereof he died." He was visited in his illness by Joash, who was then king. Over him Joash wept, and cried, "Oh, my father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" The phrase, it will be remembered, was that used by Elisha on the occasion of the translation of Elijah, and which had now passed into a proverb

expressive of consolation in sickness and encouragement in difficulties. Soon afterward the prophet died, and we are assured by Josephus that with much sorrow and lamentation he was honorably interred. Some time after his death a very memorable circumstance occurred. It is thus narrated: "And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet."

"This miracle," as Dr. Hales well observes, "was the immediate work of God, and concurred with the translation of Elijah to keep alive in a degenerate age the grand truth of a bodily resurrection, which the translation of Enoch was calculated to produce on the antediluvian world, and which the resurrection of Christ in a glorified body fully illustrated." Or, in the language of Calmet: "This great miracle is the symbol and prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there being this important difference—that Elisha raised a dead body without raising himself, while Jesus Christ not only raised himself, but gives life to all who believe in him." "After his death," says the son of Sirach, "his body prophesied; he did wonders in his life, and at his death his works were marvelous."

With what satisfaction is the review of such a life as that of Elisha accompanied! His moral character bears the nearest inspection and shines forth without a flaw. His powers, as delineated by the pen of inspiration, were nobly exercised, his time continually occupied, and his life a long discourse, both in words and in actions of benevolence and charity. Truly he possessed his master's spirit in a double portion. His heart was tenderness; his speech fidelity, whether as used to kings or menials; his death, like his life, bespake the service of his Lord; "even in his ashes lived their wonted fires."

Repose, Elisha! Carefully the earth keeps thy hallowed remains. Repose with thy brethren, holy men of old, inspired of God! Surely the world which contains the dust of those so dear to him cannot be doomed to complete destruction. No; the fires shall purify, but not annihilate; the elements shall melt, but it is that they may be remoulded; and out of the universal conflagration will come forth "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"—the abode of the Good Shepherd and his flock.

# XXIV.

## NAAMAN.

ISRAEL was now in a state of much depression and weakness because of the general apostasy of its people from the service and worship of the true God, and Syria, on its northern borders, was the common instrument of its humiliation and chastisement.

In one of the frequent forays which marauding companies of Syrians had made into the land for purposes of insult and plunder, they had carried away captive a little Israelitish maiden, who appears to have belonged to one of the few families that, in the midst of widespread degeneracy, had remained faithful to the God of their fathers. Perhaps, in the division of the spoils on their return, she had been allotted to the Syrian household in which we find her; or we may imagine the beautiful and timid captive exposed for sale in the crowded slave-market of Damascus, and in this way becoming a domestic attendant upon the wife of Naaman the Syrian.

This man, distinguished for personal valor and for signal military successes which had made the whole land his debtor, was the commander-in-chief of the armies of Syria, and the confidential adviser of his king, to whom he stood nearest in rank and power. It is natural to picture him as living in a palace, in the midst of one of those orchards of apricots, pomegranates and other trees which, for three thousand years, have made

Damascus the garden of the East. But what embittered all his enjoyments and withered all the beauty of the paradise by which he was surrounded was the fact that he was afflicted with the terrible and loathsome disease of leprosy, so that, as good Bishop Hall has quaintly said, "the basest slave in all Syria would not have changed skins with Naaman had he gotten his office to boot."

He appears to have been a man of much natural generosity, and to have treated the little captive girl so kindly as to have gradually won her confidence and awakened her sympathy; so that, while she did not forget her own kindred and her father's house, and was no stranger to home-sickness, she gradually became, in some degree, reconciled to her captivity. It was not easy for the natural hope and buoyancy of so young a heart to continue habitually repressed, and, like the caged bird, she could sing at times even in her bondage.

We may conceive her to have looked on at first with affectionate but silent interest, to have seen the agents of superstition trying all their charms and the native physicians exhausting all their skill upon her master, in vain; for still the fatal malady, which her Hebrew education had taught her to regard with peculiar dread and aversion, made steady progress, consuming his strength and "wasting his beauty like a moth," and threatened soon to turn that splendid mansion into a house of mourning. Waiting from day to day upon her mistress, she read in her countenance the darkening signs of anxiety and sorrow, and unable at length to repress the thoughts which had often risen in her mind, with affectionate artlessness she one day dropped the kind hint: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

Here was a gleam of light in the midst of the thickening gloom. Her mistress reports the words of the little maiden to her husband, and as the dying man hears them, he once more begins to hope for life. Further inquiry increases the hope, and

he resolves that he will try this one additional means for recovery; he will pay a visit to Elisha ere he "shakes hands with the grave" and yields himself up to a loathsome and inevitable death. The consent of King Benhadad to his journey is easily obtained; he even writes a letter of commendation to Jehoram, the king of Israel, in order to facilitate Naaman's mission, for he is anxious to save the life of one who has so often led his armies to victory, and has not more proved himself a valiant leader in battle than a wise counselor in peace.

We must imagine Naaman hastening with eager promptitude across the Lebanon, into the land whither a new hope beckons him. He travels in his chariot in a style appropriate to one who stands nearest in authority and dignity to the Syrian throne, with a numerous retinue of attendants, with talents of silver and pieces of gold equal in value to many thousand dollars of our money, and with many changes of those rich festal garments which formed so much of the wealth of the East; and all this with the evident design, should the attempt to cure him succeed, of bestowing upon his deliverer a princely reward. The vine-covered hills of Samaria and the beautiful valley of the Jordan, which had more than once been the scene of his military forays, open peacefully before him and seem to invite him onward.

But why do his servants direct his chariot to the palace of the king, and not at once to the humble cottage of the prophet? He appears to have supposed, with his royal master, that while Elisha was to administer the cure, he must, like the enchanters and necromancers of his own country, be entirely under the king's authority, and that the best way, therefore, to secure his interposition was first to obtain the king's favor. It is an instance of the stupidity with which men, untaught by divine revelation, often conceive on religious subjects. He did not know as yet that, in matters of a spiritual kind, Elisha acknowledged no master but God—that this was a province into which Jehoram must not dare to pass, and that it would be easier and

safer to go into the thunder-cloud and command the lightning where to strike than to intrude within the sacred circle where the prophet of Jehovah exercised his great and awful prerogative.

When the letter of the Syrian monarch was read by his royal brother of Israel, its effect was to awaken in him indignation, surprise and alarm: "Now, when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy." Read with the jealous eyes of one whose dominions had repeatedly been invaded and ravaged by this very Benhadad, it seemed, in requiring him to do what was only possible for the hand of Omnipotence, intended to provoke new quarrels that should lead to new wars and humiliations. And so Jehoram, we are told, idolater though he was, rent his clothes, astonished by the blasphemy and confounded by the arrogant and overbearing unreasonableness of such a demand. "Am I God," he exclaimed, "to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

Let us not imagine, however, that this was a useless link in the chain of incidents that were soon to have so remarkable and blessed an issue. We must remember, if we would interpret the whole of this history aright, that the highest end of all that happened was to bring out before the heathen, with irresistible demonstration, the true divinity and omnipotence of the God of Israel—that "he was the God," and that it was therefore necessary, not only that the utter impotence of all the false gods of heathenism for effecting such a cure as Naaman now sought should have been shown, but the equal inadequacy of every other agency than that of the finger of God confessed and proclaimed, and that the stage should thus be cleared of every intervening veil and obstruction before the prophet of the Lord stepped upon the scene.

All this which was now transpiring in the palace of Jehoram was not long in becoming known to Elisha; and before Naaman had time to give vent to his feelings, as not only disappointed, but cruelly duped and mocked, the prophet's servant was standing in the presence of the king and delivering a message from his master, marked by all that simplicity and majesty which became a prophet of God, in which he at once rebuked the needless alarms of the king, and summoned the Syrian chief to the true place of cure: "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

The words may, without strain or violence, be imagined by us to have been spoken by the gospel of Christ when, in the ministry of our Lord and his apostles, it appeared in its full might and glory on the earth. Naaman the Syrian represents our fallen race, leprous and wretched through sin and its woeful fruits. Science and human philosophy and literature and government and the arts had all done their utmost for ages to make the poor leper better; but his worst wounds remained unhealed and the seat of the malady unreached, and when all the experiments had failed and all these human agents were at their wits' end, Christianity came with its heavenly medicines, having the power of God hidden in them, and said, with a confidence which the history of the evangelized portion of our race has amply justified, "Bring the leper hither to me."

It is natural to suppose that Naaman would now return to his chariot and resume his journey with more of buoyant expectation than ever; for he must have noticed that the prophet's words not only contained an invitation to come to him, but seemed to hold out no uncertain promise of a cure. There was evidently, however, not a little in the state of his mind, as well as of his body, that needed to be corrected and healed. He counted much on the influence of the rewards which he brought with him, and still more perhaps on the imposing effect of his rank and style and retinue,

and expected that, as he came up "with his horses and with his chariot" to the humble gate of the prophet, he, the great Syrian lord, would be welcomed with no small show of deference.

What a contradiction, then, must it have been to his expectation, what a mortification to his pride, what a revulsion to everything that was heathen and even human within him, when there was no flutter or excitement whatever at his approach—no attempt to meet his "pomp and circumstance" after its own fashion—when even the prophet himself did not come forth to receive him, but, remaining within the recesses of his chamber, sent out a solitary messenger to him with this strange message: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean"!

To get at the explanation of Elisha's behavior at this juncture—to see at once its wisdom and its kindness—we must have before our mind the fact that something more and higher was aimed at than Naaman's cure, even his deliverance from idolatry as well as from leprosy; not only the restoration of his health, but his introduction into the true faith and kingdom of God. There was an unconscious but real and rapid moral education of this interesting man sought by Elisha, in all that he now did or abstained from doing, which was intended to secure that he should derive effectual and permanent religious benefit from his miraculous cure when it was wrought.

Moreover, if we would catch the true spirit of the scene, and look upon it from the loftiest point of observation, we must ever be recurring to the fact that the omnipotence of the God of Israel, the only living and true God, was meant, by the manner and shape of the incidents, to be placed in as impressive contrast with the impotence of the false gods of heathenism as in that sublime trial-scene which had been conducted by Elisha's great predecessor on Mount Carmel.

When these principles are kept steadily before our minds, they shed most instructive light upon every part of Elisha's dealings

with this Syrian chief. Naaman had counted on deference being shown him because of his rank and wealth and renown; he had expected to be cured, not simply as a poor leper, but as the great military commander, the hero of a hundred fights; and he must therefore be taught that all men stand on an equality, as dependants on Heaven's mercy—that "rich and poor meet together" here, and that "there is no respect of persons with God."

Moreover, had the cure been performed in the manner in which Naaman anticipated that it would be done—by the prophet's coming out to him, and with many mystic signs and incantations, and the moving of his hands up and down over the more diseased parts of his body, after the manner of the magicians of his own country—he would have been in some danger of regarding Elisha as only a more skillful and dextrous magician than they, and the simple working of the power of God, without any interposing sign or human manipulation, would not have been made to stand out in such distinct prominence.

I conceive that the ends contemplated by the prophet were further served by the fact that Naaman was directed to "go and wash in Jordan." For unquestionably it was true that Abana and Pharpar, those beautiful streams flowing from the northern sides of Hermon, which irrigated the orchards and gardens of Damascus, were in themselves far more pure and salubrious than the Jordan, and when *its* waters were turned into the sign and instrument of healing, it would induce him all the more readily to connect the cure with no particular medicinal virtue in itself, but with the power of God working in it.

How very much those improper feelings to which I have now referred were at work in Naaman's bosom, and needed to be rebuked and corrected by the treatment which was adopted by the prophet, appears from the effect which the message, at its first announcement, produced on him. It seemed to his still unsubdued and untaught mind as if there were nothing but meditated slight and insult in this command of Elisha. Every part of it

was so contrary to his natural feelings, so opposite to all his preconceived notions, that it sounded to him like mockery at his fatal malady. What! had he come all the way from Damascus to Samaria only to be told to do this? He "verily thought that the prophet would have bid him do some great thing." If he had been disappointed and chagrined at some of the earlier stages of his visit, he was utterly enraged now. And while the prophet still kept silent and invisible in his chamber, and even to all appearance indifferent whether the chafed Syrian obeyed his directions or not, Naaman had already commanded his chariot away from before his gate, was hurrying back on the road to Damascus, and all his fond hopes of cure seemed on the point of being wrecked and given to the winds.

It was well for him that, at such a crisis, he had servants who, looking at the whole matter more calmly, saw it in its true light, and who loved him so well and served him so faithfully as not to fall in with his foolish humor or to flatter it, but respectfully to reason with him and persuade him to comply with the direction of the man of God. And it was better still that, after the first outbreak of his foolish anger was over, he began to see the wisdom of their words and yielded to their faithful remonstrance: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

But it is impossible not to see, in all this unreasoning and resentful dislike of Naaman to the cure prescribed for him by Elisha, a vivid representation of the opposition of the natural mind to the divine method of deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin. And it is all the more proper that we should trace this resemblance, since leprosy under the Old Testament was avowedly typical of the disease of sin and of its consequences. How averse are men to believe in the simplicity and absolute freeness of the divine plan for recovering sinners to God!—it so humbles their pride and contradicts all their preconceived notions

of what should have been. This "offence of the cross" has never ceased. Men would prefer some royal road to heaven, in which they should not be regarded and treated simply as sinners, but which should leave them somewhat still in which to glory. That rebellious and presumptuous "I thought"—the very germ of all rationalism—which would always be telling God in what manner he is to save men, is the resisting power that has shut the gate of heaven against countless thousands.

It may be said, indeed—however much the saying may have the look of paradox—that nothing is at once so easy and so difficult as the gospel method of human salvation. We shall make the one or the other of these affirmations regarding it, according as we look outward from the sinner, or look into him. Thus, so far as the removal of all legal obstructions out of the way of his pardon is concerned, and the making of a full, complete and infinitely meritorious satisfaction for his sins, this has all been done long since in the atonement of the Son of God. The door of mercy stands wide open, the banquet of heavenly and spiritual blessings is spread, all things are now ready, and the invitation and the welcome are addressed to every inhabitant of the earth.

But then, how reluctant is the heart of man to acquiesce in this method of deliverance, just because it is so strangely gratuitous and divinely free! We are always waiting for something more elaborate and more human than "Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan." We would prefer washing in our own Abanas and Pharpars. We imagine that we must surely have some great work to do, instead of simply resting with childlike trust in the great work which Christ has done for us. A thousand excuses and delays, with which men keep away from the reception of the gospel, are just so many disguised forms of aversion to it, because it tells them that "eternal life is the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We would have preferred penances and pilgrimages, laborious outward services and

costly sacrifices—something that would have appeared to give us a personal claim upon God, and have been a price in our right hand, rather than to have been saved as unworthy.

> "But Christ as soon would abdicate his own,
> As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne."

Then measuring the amount of the divine benevolence by the standard of our own—which is like imagining that there are no more waters in the ocean than we are able to carry in the hollow of our hands—we are slow to believe what the gospel declares of it. The very extent and exuberance of the love, the divine graciousness with which it comes and lays down its gifts at our very feet, make us question its reality. And yet, if the Lord had bidden us do some great thing, would we not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to us, Wash, and be clean; believe, and live?

> "I say to thee—do thou repeat
> To the first man thou mayest meet,
> In lane, highway or open street—
> That he and we and all men move
> Under a canopy of love
> As broad as the blue sky above."

Naaman is at length brought to a sense of his true position as a helpless leper, and we now follow him to the banks of the Jordan to be the delighted witnesses of his cure. And when we call up the whole scene before our imagination, we shall not fail to see that the prescribed measure, easy though it seemed and was, was admirably fitted to put to the test the simple trust of Naaman in the word of the man of God.

In all likelihood he expected that his recovery would be gradual, and that he would be made gratefully conscious of its progress as he plunged on the seven appointed times into the surging waves. But on six occasions he has already complied with the prophet's words, and each time has risen to the surface before his anxious and breathless attendants on the river's brink, sadly conscious that as yet there is no change, and with his

leprosy still clinging to him like a Nessus robe. With palpitating heart he goes down the seventh time and is covered with the waters, and now he feels the sudden passage of a new life through his whole frame. He is "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye;" "his flesh comes again to him like the flesh of a little child," and he leaps forth upon the green sward with more than the glad buoyancy of youth, a leper no more. Had he known the Hebrew psalms, as we may believe he knew them afterward, we might imagine him singing, with his attendants, on the bank of the Jordan, those words of one of the grandest of inspired poems: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

His body had not alone been the subject of a blessed change; he had, almost at the same moment, parted for ever with his idolatry. It is astonishing how rapidly the mind works at certain great crises of its history. We live an age in an hour. What a complete and sudden revolution took place in the mind of the Samaritan woman during the brief period of her interview with Jesus at the well of Jacob! From light to darkness—from the love of sin to holy service and discipleship—"from vile to pure, from earthly to divine"—the experience of that brief hour was like passing from one world into another.

There was something similar to this in the working of Naaman's mind now. He compared the utter impotence of the false gods with the omnipotence of the God of Israel, as it had been so signally put forth in his behalf; he thought with glowing gratitude of the free, unbought, sovereign mercy of this God which had visited him, a stranger and an idolater, with so great a deliverance; and he returned from the river's bank to the prophet's gate the rejoicing subject of two blessed transformations, to declare his eternal and unqualified renunciation of all the "lying vanities" of heathenism, to avow his belief that the God of Israel was the only living and true God who made the heavens and the

earth, and to bind himself by the most solemn vows to his service and worship for ever.

This brings us to notice the incidents of Naaman's subsequent interview with Elisha. I regard his words, "Behold, now, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel," as expressing at once his casting off of all subjection and allegiance to the idols of his own Syria and of all other lands, his conviction that Jehovah was the one only true God, and his immovable purpose that he should henceforth be his God.

But there is more than this in his language. He means to say that the matter had just been brought to the test of experiment in his own person, and that the issue had been such as to warrant both parts of his conclusion. "I know it," says he. He had now "the testimony in himself." In like manner, the evidence which is afforded to a true Christian of the divinity of his religion, through its divine effects upon himself, is the most valuable and home-coming of all evidences. It effectually "garrisons him," as Owen has said, "against all the assaults of unbelief." It is always near him, and grows with the increase of his own piety. "Do you demand miracles?" he can reply to his subtle questioner and tempter—"I am myself a miracle. Do you call for evidences?—I have a whole volume of them in my own heart. Now *I know*."

While the Syrian's lips are thus full of praise to Jehovah as the true God and his compassionate deliverer, his hands are full of gifts to Elisha as Jehovah's servant. "Now, I pray thee, take a blessing"—or thank-offering—"of thy servant;" and as he said the words, his attendants were ready to unload the precious treasures from his chariot and to lay them at the prophet's feet. But Elisha solemnly declines the offer, though repeated and urged again and again: "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none."

Why so stern a refusal, when Naaman was rich and grateful and the prophet needy, and when it would even have relieved

the burden of the Syrian's thankful heart to have been permitted to give? He had not thus declined the use of the little chamber with the bed and the table and the stool and the candlestick in the dwelling of the grateful Shunammite. Nor did Paul and his companions, many centuries afterward, reject the proffered hospitality of the newly-converted Lydia. The explanation is to be found in the peculiar circumstances of the case.

With Elisha, the honor of God and the character of his religion stood paramount above every other interest. These could in no degree have suffered by compliance in the other instances to which we have referred—they would even be promoted by it; but in the present case it was otherwise. Naaman was about to return immediately to his own land; his chief impressions regarding the nature of the true religion would necessarily be drawn from his intercourse with the prophet; and had Elisha accepted his gift, the suspicion might afterward have arisen in his mind that the hope of reward had been his motive in pointing him to the remedy.

But nothing mercenary must even seem to be associated with the work of God. He will not allow the moral impression of the miracle to be in the least impaired; both Naaman and his servants must be made to mark the contrast between the selfishness of heathenism and the benignant spirit of the true faith; his cure must ever stand out before him as the fruit of pure divine compassion, and never must the Syrian in future days be able to say, "I have made Elisha rich."

But there is much more difficulty found by many in satisfactorily accounting for the two requests which Naaman next proceeded to address to Elisha—the one being that he might be allowed to take back with him to his own country two mules' burden of the earth of Israel; and the other that, when his master Benhadad went into the house of Rimmon, the idol-god of Syria, to worship, and he leaned on his shoulder, he might be forgiven if he "bowed himself in the house of Rimmon." For

does not one of these requests appear to savor of superstition, and does not the other propose a compromise with idolatry?

This has often been said, but we are disposed to judge Naaman more gently. The former wish might merely be the expression of a sentiment which is strong in human nature, and which is quite innocent when kept within proper bounds—the desire to have some object near us that may help to keep alive hallowed recollections, and that shall be as a link to associate our thoughts with what is loved and distant. Naaman's aim was to have something always in his sight that would bring up Israel and the prophet and all the sacred memories of this blessed visit readily before his mind. And, moreover, if the altar on which he henceforth sacrificed and worshiped was formed of this earth, it would serve as an indication to his Syrian fellow-countrymen that while he was of the same nation with *them*, yet in religion he was identical with the worshipers of the God of Israel.

Was the feeling unnatural or blamable, especially in one whose eyes had just opened to the light and whose heart was glowing with all the ardor of first love? Such a sentiment might easily degenerate into superstition, but it was not necessarily superstitious. Have you never contracted a special regard for some particular copy of the Bible which is associated in your memory with interesting passages in your own spiritual history? Have you never found your heart bettered by visiting the scenes of holy and heroic deeds, or even looking on the faded handwriting of one who, while he lived, had made the world his debtor? Could you look without emotion on a vessel of water from the Sea of Galilee or from the well of Samaria, or upon a branch that had been plucked from one of the old olive trees in Gethsemane? And if not, do not blame this grateful Syrian that, in departing from this sacred land—the place at once of his cure and of his conversion—he "took pleasure in her stones, and her very dust was dear to him."

In regard to the second of Naaman's requests to Elisha, we

are disposed to speak with more of caution and diffidence; at the same time, when we do not find the prophet condemning him, it will surely be wisest and best so to understand his meaning and design as to be able to add, "Neither do I condemn thee." He had that day publicly avowed, in the presence of his Syrian servants and attendants, his unqualified renunciation of all idol-worship. And when he returned to Damascus, his daily offerings and holy services would tell his king and the whole city and kingdom that Jehovah alone was his God. But then he foresaw that, as the prime minister of Benhadad, he would be required to accompany him into the temple of Rimmon, and even to support his person and accommodate himself to its motions while he worshiped there, and he wished Elisha to understand that, in doing this unwelcome work, there would be no conformity to idolatry or complication with it; he would simply be discharging a civil service to his master, not offering worship to Rimmon. Still, he was anxious to learn, before he passed from the prophet's presence, whether this could be permitted. And we know how many similar questions have been raised in our times by Christian soldiers serving in idolatrous countries or under papal kings, and how difficult it has been found always to draw with delicate precision the line between what may be yielded to Cæsar and what must be rendered to God.

Some have understood the prophet's answer, "Go in peace," to indicate forbearance in the mean time with an error which he foresaw that stronger religion would be certain to cure; according to Bishop Hall's apologetic words: "It is not for us to expect a full stature in the cradle of conversion." But is it not more natural to regard the language as conveying Elisha's belief that, when Naaman discharged this service to his master, there would be no homage on his part to the idol, and at the same time leaving it with his individual conscience to determine whether it would not be still better to avoid even this semblance of evil?

# XXV.

## JEHU.[1]

THE curtain rises to show us the city of Ramoth-Gilead, embosomed among mountains, in the background, and on the stage a banquet, or probably a council of war, where Jehu sits surrounded by the most distinguished officers of the army of Israel. Suddenly interrupting their potations or cogitations, one enters the chamber whose shaggy raiment, appearance and bold bearing bespeak him a prophet or one belonging to the order. He comes from Elisha; and the Jews have a tradition that it was Jonah, who, according to them, succeeded Gehazi in that prophet's service. Whether it was so or not, this messenger of Heaven goes straight up, without ceremony or formal introduction, to Jehu, saying, "I have an errand unto thee, O captain!" And he, out of respect for his holy office, a gallant soldier as yet who had shed no blood but in fair battle, and dreaded no evil, rises at once to grant what the other requested—a private interview—furnishing no illustration of the saying—

"Conscience makes cowards of us all."

They retire into an inner chamber. When they are alone, and he has seen that the door is shut, the stranger, stooping down, draws from underneath his shaggy garment, where he had concealed it, a horn of oil, and raising himself to his full stature, empties it on Jehu's head, saying, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I

[1] Dr. Guthrie.

have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel: and thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel: for the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab every male, and him that is shut up and left in Israel: and I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah; and the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her."

Having delivered himself of a message that might well strike any man speechless with astonishment, ere the captain of the host has recovered sufficiently to detain or question him, he vanishes; like a conspirator against Jehu's life, who had sought a private interview to assassinate him as Ehud did the king of Moab, or like one who has lighted the match that carries fire to the mine and ends in a terrific explosion, he opens the door and flies, agreeably to his master's instructions, disappearing as suddenly as he came. And the incident I have related was followed by an explosion that shook the whole land, hurled the king from his throne, and buried him, his bloody mother, her idolatrous priests and every member of the royal family in a common grave under the ruins of the house of Ahab.

With the bow bent to the breaking, their loyal and long-enduring patience exhausted, the people of Israel had probably got tired out with the cruelties and idolatries of the reigning family. It was now as with a ripe pear that drops to the touch —as with a mighty stone hanging on the brow of a hill, but so undermined by winter frosts and summer rains that it needs but the push of a bold strong hand, and it leaves its bed to be shattered as it bounds from crag to crag, or be buried out of sight in the dark depths of the lake below. Aware of this, Jehu saw the sceptre within his reach, and how, stretching out his hand to seize it, not only with the sanction but at the call of Heaven, his

most ambitious dreams might be realized. With such bloody work, yet brilliant prospects, before him, his dreams—what in his more sober moments he had dismissed as dangerous, wild and airy phantoms—about to be fulfilled, no wonder his countenance, as he followed the flying messenger to the door, bore marks of strong mental agitation. His fellows, who saw that he had received some strange and stirring news, ask, "Is all well?" With cunning equal to his courage, the astute soldier at first evades the question, assuming a modest air, as if of all that company he was the least ambitious. Pressed on all sides, even bluntly told that he was lying, he at length, but to appearance reluctantly, and only in concession to their importunity, comes out with it, and having won their good graces, makes confidants of his fellow-soldiers.

Now, as it happened in many other cases, the fable of Actæon is realized. Changed by the offended goddess into the form of a stag, the hunter is pursued and devoured by his own hounds; the throne of the house of Ahab is assailed and overturned by those who were sworn to support it; the army which his son Joram maintained to defend his crown and oppress his subjects transfers its allegiance, with the facility of mercenaries, from him to Jehu. No sooner do the captains of the host see the sheen of the sacred oil on Jehu's locks, and get from his lips the story of the interview, than extemporizing a throne, and casting their garments (Eastern symbol of homage) at his feet—rougher heralds than usually proclaim the successor to the throne—they fill the air with the blare of trumpets, and cry, "Jehu is king!" So sudden and sweeping, I may remark, are the revolutions to which military governments are exposed, especially when profanity rather than prayer reigns in the camp, and the army, made up of the scum of the nation, is officered by ungodly and immoral men. A striking contrast to Cromwell's, which was not less distinguished for its piety than for its fidelity to its leader, and the brilliant victories its arms achieved, such was Jehoram's army.

Their impiety and profanity broke out in the contempt with which they spoke of a servant of the living God. "Wherefore," said they to Jehu, "came this *mad fellow* to thee?"—an ungodly, scoffing crew, they had no more respectful term for the holy man. Yet why should we wonder to find God's servants reckoned and denounced as *mad* by a world to which his own wisdom is foolishness?

Before glancing at the part—so bloody, conspicuous and successful—which Jehu played in the successive tragedies of this revolution, I may here take occasion to observe that the true pillars of a state and throne stand in the freedom, the piety and the affections of the people. Nations must be ruled somehow—either by love or fear, by the Bible or the bayonet; and ruled mainly by the former, under the influence, to a large extent, of moral and religious principles, what a contrast, in respect both of the security of the throne and the stability of its government, does England present to that of France, gifted as its people are with uncommon genius, and inspired with the most ardent love of liberty! It is nigh two hundred years since that happy island exchanged one dynasty for another, and passed—rare circumstance—through a peaceful and bloodless revolution. How many in the course of a single lifetime has France seen! She seems, indeed, to keep up, like a boy's spinning-top, by virtue of incessant revolutions; and destitute to a frightful extent as her people are of good morals and religion, how many more is she destined to suffer? We ourselves have lived to see her in the throes of five or six different political convulsions. The streets of her gay and lovely capital flashing with musketry and running red with her citizens' blood might have reminded the world of God's righteous judgment, and how, as has been well said, France lost so much good blood through the massacre of the Huguenots that she has staggered and reeled ever since.

In the conduct of the revolution which God had committed to

his hands, Jehu displayed as much wisdom as energy. His conduct was like his driving—"he drove furiously;" but the times demanded it. Dangerous in all cases when the crisis has come, hesitation or delay had been fatal in his. Having, by appearing to consult them, won the favor of his companions in arms, enlisted them in his cause, and so turned into partisans those who might otherwise have been rivals, his first step is to catch the bird in the nest. He must seize the king where he lay in Jezreel. Should tidings of this revolution meet him, Joram takes the alarm and escapes; so, with a promptitude that deserved and was likely to secure success, Jehu hurries trusty men to the gates with this order: "Let none go forth nor escape out of the city to go to tell it in Israel." He will be his own messenger. The snake rattles before it strikes; but the lightning strikes before it thunders—whom it kills never hears the peal. And it was with the suddenness and surprise of a thunderbolt Jehu sought to launch himself on the head of Joram. So the cry is, "To horse! to horse!" all is haste and bustle; men are arming, women are weeping, hasty farewells are said, and the gate thrown open at his approach, out drives Jehu with his chosen men to lash his foaming horses along the road that lay a day's march between Jezreel and Ramoth-gilead. No stay, no delay; to the surprise and terror of the peasant ploughing his father's fields, on sweeps that cloud of dust where chariots and horsemen and battle brands are dimly and briefly seen. The Jordan at length is reached. A moment to slake the thirst of their panting steeds, and at the word in they plunge to stem the flood, and from the other shore push on with new vigor to surprise and seize their prey. The cavalcade is at length descried from the watch-tower of Jezreel. One and another and another messenger from Joram hastens to meet and question Jehu, and to the question, "Is it peace?" get no other but this rough and ominous reply, "What hast thou to do with peace? Get thee behind me"—fall to the rear if you value your life.

Astonished, and their curiosity, if not their fears, awakened, Joram and his ally, Ahaziah, king of Judah, throw themselves into their chariots to meet Jehu. He has been recognized by the keen eyes of the sentinel; "the driving," he tells the king, "is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously." They meet—place ominous of evil to Ahab's race—in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite—him whose blood has been crying out for vengeance, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Now the prayer is to be answered; "the hour and the man are come."

Beyond replying, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" Jehu wastes no time nor words upon the king. The answer has hardly left his lips when an arrow leaves his bow, and swiftly cleaving the air, directed by a surer hand than his, quivers in Joram's heart. He dies. The mother speedily follows, treading on the heels of her son. Ere another hour has come, this proud, painted, false, treacherous, cruel, implacable, bloody woman, flung from a window by her slaves, in answer to Jehu's appeal, "Who is on my side? who?" is turned into dog's meat; the dogs are crunching her bones on the streets of Jezreel. A princess, a king's daughter, a king's wife, a king's mother—what a fall was there! So the persecutors of the righteous, and the iniquity of high places, perish!

Jehu has still more bloody work to do, and in doing it—as when the lash is in his hand and his chariot goes bounding on—"he driveth furiously." His eye does not pity nor his hand spare till he has emptied the last drop of the vial of Heaven's vengeance on the house and seed of Ahab. Seventy sons of that weak and wicked king are living in Samaria, ready to fill the vacant throne, and if they are wanted, supply kings to all the neighboring nations. These cubs as well as the bear must be slain, these saplings as well as the old tree cut down, nor drop of Ahab's blood be left in a living vein. With one stroke of his

pen Jehu strikes off their heads. A letter, couched in bitter irony, and borne with speed to Samaria, challenges its rulers, adherents of the house of Ahab, to set up the best and bravest of the seventy, that he and Jehu may have a fair fight for the crown. The proposal fills these cowards with dismay. "Two kings stood not before him," they said; "how then shall we stand?" Honor, oaths, fidelity, are given to the wind. False to their God, these men, as may be expected of all false to him, betray their trust. False to their masters, they barter their lives to save their own, and seventy ghastly heads are found one morning piled up by the gate of Jezreel.

Not yet appeased, Naboth's blood, and that of the righteous whom Jezebel had slain, still cries on Heaven for vengeance. Another quarry has to be struck down. Two-and-forty brethren of Ahaziah, king of Judah, whose blood was tainted with that of Ahab, are, unsuspecting of evil, on their way to pay a visit to their cousins—those whose heads are bleaching in the sun by the gate of Jezreel. The cousins meet, but not in this world. An opportune visit for Jehu—at one full sweep he encloses the whole brood in his net; and while the famous character who is now to enter on the stage never wanted a man to stand before the Lord, and survived in his family to see thrones emptied, dynasties and kingdoms perish, Ahab has fulfilled his doom. His house is left unto him desolate—cut down root and branch. His sin—as, sooner or later, unless forgiven, all our sins shall do—has found him out, and, in extinguishing his family, a righteous God pays him back in the very coin by which, in destroying Naboth and all his children, he obtained unjust possession of the vineyard at Jezreel.

One great and yet bloodier work still waits Jehu's avenging arm. The priests and worshipers of Baal must be destroyed. For that purpose, and for such a sacrifice as was never offered in the idol's temple, he has a stroke of policy—a *coup d'état*—arranged, which only a man with cunning as profound as his

daring was bold would have conceived or ventured on. His is one of the greatest, boldest, bloodiest plots in history, and he is on his way to carry it into execution, and so finish the work God had given him to do, when he meets Jonadab, the son of Rechab. Astute enough to see that, though he held a divine commission, he must neglect the use of no means, and that none was more likely to promote his object than the countenance of Jonadab—a man distinguished alike for his patriotism and his piety, for the severity of his manners and the universal esteem of the people—Jehu invites him to a seat in his chariot, greeting this eminent Israelite and original founder of all total abstinence societies with these brave, pious words, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord!"

I would take occasion from this case to remark—

1. That there is a zeal of selfishness which, though it may appear to be, is not, zeal for the Lord. "Is thine heart right?" was the question with which Jehu accosted Jonadab; and if the question be understood in its highest and holiest sense, his subsequent history proves that he had most need to put it to himself. The contrast between the spirit of that question and the character of his future life is such as to painfully remind us of these words: "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"

God frequently uses the wicked as his tools—when the rod has served its purpose, breaking it and casting it into the fire. His own people also have been called and constrained—I may say against their natural feelings—to be so. Instruments of his righteous vengeance, they have had to shed the blood of others when they would rather have shed their own—to afflict humanity when they would rather have poured wine and oil into its bleeding wounds—to appear men of strife when they were sighing for peace, and, wearied of turmoil, controversy and conflict, were

saying, as they turned their eyes on the calm heavens above, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" But there is no evidence whatever of such a mind or temper in Jehu. There is no relenting, no recoil from his stern mission, no expression of pity. Apparently congenial to his nature, he found in his mission the means of gratifying his passions, and that personal ambition which, rather than zeal for the Lord, was, I fear, his animating, ruling principle. We would not deal unjustly, nor even very severely, by him; but when he had reached the summit of his ambition, and leaving a bloody footprint on every step, had climbed to the throne, where was the zeal he boasted of—his zeal for the Lord? It looks as if he had all along been consciously playing a part, and finding no further use of it, had now dropped the mask. We are told that "he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, but departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

It may be that Jehu deceived himself. We are unwilling to regard him as a hypocrite; and it is certain that men—with a heart which the word of God pronounces to be deceitful above all things as well as desperately wicked—have sometimes deceived themselves more than the most famous jugglers or impostors have deceived others. And what made it easier for Jehu to do so was this—that the reformation of the land and its religious interests did not conflict with, but rather ran in the same direction as, his own passions and ambition. The public interests and his own personal objects were in perilous accord.

Such a position is a dangerous one for any man to be placed in. There is no doubt to what the ship owes her progress when her course is up the stream, or the waters of an opposing tide are foaming on her bows; her moving power is evidently a heavenly one—the wind that sings in her cordage and fills her swelling sails. But the case may be otherwise. The tide, the current on whose bosom our bark is floating, may run in the very

direction we wish to pursue; and as in such a case we may be deceived as to the power that moves us, so it is easy for us to persuade ourselves that we are moved by zeal for the Lord when, I may say, we are not blown on by heavenly, but only borne on by earthly, influences—such as regard for our character; such as the approbation of men; such as the pride of consistency; such as the gratification, perhaps, of what are more or less common to all—humane and charitable feelings.

"Let a man examine himself," says an apostle; and nothing stands more in need of being sifted, analyzed and tested than our zeal for the Lord. Have not men preached Christ for contention? Have not as large sacrifices been offered at the shrine of party as were ever laid on the altar of principle? Has not vanity often had fully as much to do as humanity with raising asylums for the orphan, the houseless and the sick—men, in what the world regards as monuments of their generosity, seeking but to gratify their ambition—a monument to themselves more enduring and honorable than brass or marble? And have not men even burned at the stake and died on the scaffold, and obtained a place for their names on the roll of martyrs, with no higher aim than that earthly glory which the soldier seeks in the deadly breach and at the cannon's fiery mouth? I do not say that any man's motives are altogether pure. Such an analysis as the Searcher of hearts could make would detect what was "of the earth earthy" in our noblest sacrifices and most holy services. Our wine is never without its water, nor our silver without its dross, nor we less entirely and absolutely dependent on the mercy of God and the merits of his Son than he who, when one spoke to him of his good works, replied, "I take my good works and my bad works, and casting them into one heap, fly from both to Christ—to fall at his feet, crying, 'Save me, Lord! I perish.'"

Still, when zeal for our own ends and interests appears so like zeal for God—when the counterfeit bears so close a resemblance to good money that it needs a sharp eye to discern the difference

and detect the cheat—when such as, in their natural honesty, would scorn to impose on others or make a stalking-horse of religion may impose on themselves—it behooves us to see that God, and not self, is the centre of our system, and that, in the words of the apostle, "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do"—not seeking our own glory—"we do all to the glory of God."

2. There is a zeal without knowledge that is not zeal for the Lord. "I bear them witness," says Paul, speaking of his countrymen, "that they have a zeal, but not according to knowledge." Unless directed by that, zeal may be wasted, and worse than wasted. Baleful as when it calls down fire from heaven, it may prove positively injurious to the cause of truth and righteousness.

And who can read the history of the Church, or almost of any section of it, without feelings of sorrow and regret that so much zeal has been expended on the outworks and less important parts of religion? The water that might have been turned with advantage on the green sward and grateful soil has been spent on barren and thankless sands, and like the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream, which devoured the fat and were themselves none the fatter, how has zeal about ceremonies, forms of government and modes of worship, without any advantage whatever to the interests of piety, outraged the gentle spirit of religion, and swallowed up the weightier matters of the law! Has the zeal been according to knowledge which, as if the outworks were more important than the citadel, gave more heed to matters of form than to those of faith?—that, expending itself on the ornaments and walls of the temple, left the light in the lamp and the fire of the altar to expire? I cannot doubt that the prince of the powers of the air has had a hand in many of those storms about minor matters which have so often agitated, and, but for Christ's interposition, would have sunk, his Church. Speaking of Satan, the apostle says, "We are not ignorant of his devices;" and with such device as military commanders employ when they make a

feint attack on some outwork that, while the defenders of a beleaguered city fly to its protection, they may seize the citadel, Satan has raised many controversies about secondary matters; his object to kindle unholy passions, weaken the Church by divisions, and divert men's attention from Christ and him crucified, from souls and them saved.

Controversies will arise that are not to be avoided; and it is also true that what the world regards as small matters may in the light of their consequences assume a character of the highest importance. Crowns have been lost and won on a narrow battle-field; a small hole in its hedge admitted the serpent into Eden; and solid rocks have been rent asunder by the tiny seed which wind or bird of heaven had dropped into their fissure. Yet when all the zeal and money and time and prayers we can bestow are all too little for saving souls, it must be a melancholy spectacle to the angels of heaven, still more to Him who gave his blood to save us, to see the life-boat's crew turn away from those who, with outstretched hands, are crying, "Save us! we perish" —to waste the precious moments in angry debates on the mending of a spar or the shape and form of a sail.

We may well believe that, and without breach of charity doubt whether their zeal is not rather kindled of hell than of heaven who are more zealous for the points on which they differ than for the principles on which they agree with other Christians. He at least presents a wretched specimen of religion who labors more to convert Christian men to his own sectarian views than men who are no Christians to Christ and saving faith. This is zeal for a sect, certainly not for the Lord.

Not only so, but the worst passions have been animated and the most shocking crimes been committed by such as have said with Jehu, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." Paul persecuted the Christians, and, exceedingly mad against them, haled men and women to prison, compelling them to blaspheme, and thought the while that he did God service. Many others have done the

like. The Inquisition, with all its unutterable cruelty and bloody horrors, sprang from religious zeal, of a kind. If zeal has bravely borne the fires of the stake, zeal also has kindled them; all the difference, in some cases, between the martyr whose memory we revere and his murderers whose names we load with infamy this —in the one case the zeal was, and in the other it was not, according to knowledge. Excellent property as it is, when committed to such poor earthen vessels as we are, zeal is apt to turn acrid and sour. We have need, therefore, when most zealous for the Lord, or when we fancy ourselves to be so, to see what spirit we are of. Are the objects we aim at, and the means we use to accomplish them, such as God approves? He will not be served with "strange fire;" and repudiating all uncharitableness and bitterness and intolerance and persecution, Jesus Christ will have his followers support his cause and defend his crown by no other sword and in no other spirit than his own. Intolerance, fierce uncharitable passions, the bitter tongue, pens dipped in gall, are not zeal for the Lord, but weapons, equally with Peter's sword, repudiated and forbidden by Him who, turning to that disciple, said, "Put up again thy sword into its place; they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

3. Being on their guard against a spurious, let men cultivate a true, zeal for the Lord. Zeal is an essential as well as excellent characteristic of true religion. Dead bodies acquire the temperature of surrounding objects; not so living ones. Hence plants are less cold than the snow that wraps them, and the polar bear lies in her icy cave with blood as warm as our own. Wherever there is life there is heat; nor is it till death ensues that the brow has the touch of marble and the body becomes as cold as the grave it lies in or the waves that are its floating sepulchre. So wherever there is Christian principle—a new and spiritual life—there is and must be zeal. There may be, and are, different degrees of it, just as the blood of some animals is warmer, and the lustre of some stars is brighter, and the perfume of some

flowers is sweeter, than that of others; but zeal for the Lord, more or less developed, will be found in all true Christians. Continued torpor is as incompatible with spiritual as with animal existence, and cold indifference to the cause of Christ, the glory of God, the good of souls, the honor and interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, as great a moral as this is a physical impossibility—a man who does not breathe, or a sun that does not shine, or a fire that does not burn. Piety, as has been well remarked, may consist with error, but cannot with indifference; and if such be our state, our usual and permanent condition, in imagining ourselves Christians it is certain that "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

# XXVI.

## JONAH.

IT is a fact to be distinctly borne in mind that the order in which we have the prophetical books in the Bible is not the order of time, not the order in which the prophets lived. Their relation in this respect cannot be determined by their sequence in the sacred volume, as their place in it has been determined by various considerations, of which time has been only one element. In other words, the arrangement of the books of Scripture is only *partly* chronological. Some of them follow each other in their natural succession, and others do not. Jonah, for example, lived before most of the prophets whose writings precede the book of Jonah in the sacred canon. This book is remarkable as being the only one called prophetic which contains no prophecy. As the subject of it lived, so the book itself was probably written, at an earlier date than its place in the Bible indicates. Of unknown authorship and disputed meaning, yet of surpassing interest, it stands out of the history of wars and conquests with a truthfulness to human nature and a loftiness of religious sentiment that more than vindicate its insertion in the inspired volume.

The prophet Jonah was to Jeroboam II. what Elisha had been to Jehu. Though slightly mentioned in the history, he is thrice brought before us in Jewish tradition, and conveys an instruction reaching far beyond his times. He is supposed to have been the child of the widow of Zarephath—the boy who attended Elijah

to the wilderness—the youth who anointed Jehu. His wondrous story, like that of Cambuscan and Christabel, seems only "half told." It breaks off so abruptly that you almost fancy that a part had been torn away from the close. That song of deliverance, said, by some absurd mistake of transcribers, to have issued from the whale's belly, instead of—as its every word imports—being sung upon the shore, is the only specimen of the prophet's genius. Although not uttered, it was perhaps conceived, in the strangest prison where man ever breathed, fitly called the "belly of hell" (or the grave), where a deep within a deep, a ward within the "innermost main," confined the body without crushing the spirit of the fugitive prophet. It is a sigh of the sea—a "voice from the deeps," audible to this hour. The most expressive word, perhaps, in it all is the pronoun "thy"—"thy billows and thy waves have passed over me." Think of God's ocean being felt as all pressing against that living dungeon, and demanding, in the thunder of all its surges, the fugitive of Tarshish, and yet, after exciting unspeakable terror and remorse, demanding him in vain! With what a complicated feeling of thankfulness and of reflex terror he seems to have regarded his danger and his deliverance! And how the strange shrine he had found for groans unheard, vows unwitnessed, and prayers broken by the lashing of the monster's tail or by the grinding of his teeth, suggests the far-off temple, the privileges of which he had never so much valued as now when, seen from the "belly of hell," it seemed the very gate of heaven!

But the poetry of the book of Jonah is not confined to this little strain. Everything about it

> "Suffers a sea change
> Into something rich and strange."

There is, first, the abrupt call to the Jewish prophet to repair, alone, and confront that great city, the name of which was a terror in his native land. It was a task which might have blanched the cheek of Isaiah and chilled the blood of Ezekiel.

They stood afar off as they predicted the destruction and torment of Israel's enemies; but Jonah must draw near and encounter fierce looks of hatred, if not imprisonment and death. And yet it was not without a severe struggle that he determined to disobey, for hitherto he had been a faithful servant of God. But perhaps some misbegotten dream had crossed his couch, stunned his soul with the noises of Nineveh, lost him amid its vast expanse, terrified him with its seas of faces, and so shaken his courage that the next day he arose and fled from the breath of the Lord, crying out, "If the semblance be so dreadful, what must be the reality?" And westward to Joppa, looking not behind him, ran Jonah. While Balaam was the first impious prophet on record, Jonah is the first temporizer and trifler with the gift and mission of God. Irritable in disposition, perhaps indolent, perhaps self-seeking, certainly timid, he permits his temperament to triumph over his inspiration. It is the tale of thousands who, from the voice of the Lord which surrounds them like an eddying wind, and says, "Onward to duty, to danger, to glory and immortality!" flee to the Tarshish of pleasure, or to that of business which is not theirs, or to that of selfish inaction, or to that of a not less selfish despair. It is well for them if a storm disturb their course and drive them into the true port, as poverty did to Johnson and as misery to Cowper; but more frequently—

> "As they drift upon their path,
> There is silence deep as death"—

silence amid which their last plunge in the dead sea of oblivion, and their last drowning gurgle, become audible as thunder on the summer deep.

We have, as the next scene in this singular history, Jonah gone down into the ship and sunk in sleep. This was no proof of insensibility. Sleep often says to the eyes of the happy, "Burn on, through midnight, like the stars; ye have no need of me;" but to those of the wretched, "I will fold you in my mantle, and

bury you in sweet oblivion till the morning come." In certain states of desolation there lies a power which draws down irresistibly the coverlet of sleep. Not in the fullness of security, but of insecurity—not in perfect peace, but in desperate recklessness —Jonah was overpowered by slumber. He slept, but the sea did not. The sight of a slumbering sinner can awake the universe. But the rocking ship, the roaring sea and the clamorous sailors only confirmed the slumber of the prophet—even as the dead in the centre of the city seem to sleep more soundly than in the country: who hears of *their* apparitions? Roused he is at last by the master, who is more terrified at his unnatural sleep than at the sea's wild vigil. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that thy God will think of us, that we perish not." The God of the fugitive and slumbering Jonah is felt, after all, to be their safety, and in awakening the prophet they feel as if they were awakening his Deity. He had an angry God, but they had none.

How different the sleep of Jonah from the sleep of Jesus on the Lake of Galilee! The one is the sleep of desperation, the other of peace; the one that of the criminal, the other of the child; the one that of God's fugitive, the other of his favorite; the darkness over the head of the one is the frown of anger; the other the mask upon the forehead of love. But each is the centre of his several ship—each, in different ways, is the cause of the storm; in each, in different ways, lies the help of the vessel; each must awake—the criminal to lighten the ship of his burden; the Son to rebuke the winds and waves, and produce immediately a great calm.

The moment Jonah entered the ship, instinct probably told the sailors that all was not right with him. The fugitive from God carries about him as distinct marks as the fugitive from man. He too has the restless motion, the unhappy eye, the unaccountable agitation, the mutilated or the melancholy repose. He too has the "avenger of blood" behind him. Who has not witnessed

such God-chased men, fleeing from a great purpose of intellect, a high ideal of life, noble prospects, from their happiness itself, and the faster they fled, the more lamentable became the chase? And who has not felt, too, that the place where such recreants were was dangerous, since they had become as a "rolling thing before the whirlwind" of divine wrath? And what inscription can be conceived more painful than that which must be sculptured upon the sepulchres of such—"Fallen from a great hope"? Jonah had betrayed his secret by words as well as by looks. "He had *told* them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord." And after his lot is drawn, he proffers himself willingly to the sacrifice, for his conscience had awaked with him, and he began to fear the roused sea less than to remain in the midst of a drowning ship and a desperate crew. It was better to "fall into the hands of God than of men." And so soon as the victim, who had been demanded by all those waves, small and great, shrieking or sunk, clear-crashing or hoarse, was yielded to their fury, a sullen growl of satisfaction first, then a loud signal for retreat, and lastly, a whisper commanding universal silence, seem to testify that the sacrifice is accepted, the ship safe, and Jonah at the mercy of the deep. Even so when depart the self-stunted great or the inconsistent and undeveloped good, man and Nature seem to say, half in sorrow and half in gladness, but wholly in submission, "It is well."

But Jonah must not yet depart; he had yet work to do, sufferings to bear, sins to contract, a name of checkered interest to leave to the world. "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." As a "creature of the great calm" which was suddenly produced on the sea, there appeared, emerging from the lowermost deep, and attracted, it might be, by the wondrous silence which had followed the wondrous storm, an enormous fish, which swallowed the prophet and descended with him into the sea again. We do not seek to prove or to commend this incident to the logical intellect or the sensuous apprehension;

we look at it ourselves, and show it to others, in the light of *faith*. Nor let any one think himself of superior understanding because he disbelieves it. If it had been a foolish legend, why have so many self-conceited fools rejected it, and why has it been believed by Milton, by Newton, and by "Him who spake as never man spake"? As it is, this great fish doth show its back, "most dolphin-like," above the waves, and floats at once an emblem of God's forbearance to his feeble and fugitive ones and of the faithfulness of his promise to his own buried Son: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

After being thrown out on the shore nearest Assyria, and singing his song of thanksgiving, Jonah, thus strangely recalled to his post, is urged again by the word of the Lord to enter Nineveh. A "dreadful sound"—the sound of the sea—is in his ears, repeating the call. Alone, and unnoticed in a crowd composed of the confluence of all nations, he enters the capital of the East. After, perhaps, a short silence—the silence of wonder at the sight of that living ocean—he raises his voice. At first, feeble, tremulous, scarcely heard, it is swollen by every tributary street, as he passes, into a loud imperious sound which all the cries of Nineveh are unable to drown: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It is but a simple sentence, uttered again and again in terms unvaried. Its tones as well as its terms are the same; it is a deep monotony, as if learned from a dying wave. Its effect is aided, too, by the appearance of the prophet. Haggard by watchfulness, soiled by travel, "bearded like the pard," with a wild, hungry fire in his eye, he seems hardly a being of this earth. Nineveh is smitten to the heart. Ere he has pierced one-third of it, it capitulates to the message, the voice and the figure of this stranger. The king proclaims a fast, and all, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. And still on amid these trembling, fasting and sackcloth-clad multitudes, slowly and steadfastly moves the solitary man, looking neither to the

right hand nor to the left, but uttering, in the same unmitigated tone, the same incessant cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

We have here a striking proof of the power which units, when placed on the right side—that of God and truth—usually exert over the masses of men. As the figure one is to the ciphers, few or many, which range after it, so is the hero, the saint, the poet, the prophet and the sage to their species. One man enters, thirty-four years ago, the western metropolis of Scotland, sits quietly down in a plain house in the north-west suburb, and writes sermons, which speedily change his pulpit into a battery and memorize every Sabbath by a moral thunder-storm. Private as pestilence comes another, five years later, into London, and his wild cry, lonely at first, as that of John in the desert, at last startles the press, the parliament, the court, the country without, the throne within, and it is felt that the one man has conquered the two millions. Nay, was there not, two thousand years ago, from an obscure mount in Galilee, heard a voice, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"? and has not that voice, though clouded by opposition, choked in blood, crushed under the gravestone, at length commanded the attention, if not yet the obedience, of the world? Let no one say, in despair, "I am but one;" in his unity, as in the unity of a sword, lies his might; if his metal be true, his singleness is strength; he may be multiplied, indeed, but he cannot be divided. Minorities—and minorities of one—generally do the real work of mankind.

The last scene of Jonah's history partakes of the same marvelous character with the rest. God determines to spare the city at its crying. Jonah is angry. His occupation is gone; his character for veracity is impeached; he has become a false prophet; better have been rolling in the deep still than to face the people of Nineveh when the forty days are past. He is angry, and he wishes to die—to die, because millions are not.

Expecting the destruction of the city by earthquake or flame from heaven, he had gone out from it and erected a booth or shelter, to screen his head from the sun; and he is there when he hears of the respite granted to the city. A fiercer fire than the sun's is now kindled in his heart, and, mingling with the heat which the booth imperfectly alleviates, it drives him almost to frenzy. He assails Omnipotence with savage irony. In answer, God prepares a large gourd, or species of palm, which springs up like an exhalation and steeps his head with grateful coolness. Jonah is glad of it; it somewhat mollifies his indignant feelings, and under its shadow he sinks into repose. He awakes; the morning has risen like a furnace, but the gourd is withered; a worm has destroyed it, its cool shade is gone, and the arid leaves seem of fire, as they bend above his head, in a vehement but dry east wind which has sprung up. He faints, partly in pain, and partly in sorrow because of the green and beautiful plant, and renews, in bitter accents, his yesterday's cry: "It were better for me to die than to live." Slowly there drop down upon him from heaven the words, "Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?" and he answers, in the quick accents of despite and fury, "I do well to be angry, even unto death. Be angry, yea, I could die for my gourd." "Then, saith the Lord, thou hast had pity on the plant, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which in a night rose, and in a night perished (which was not thine, and which only for a few hours was with thee). And why should not I have mercy on that great city, Nineveh, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and left hand (innocent as the gourd itself!), and also much cattle (poor dumb ones!)?" And there, to the imagination, still sits the stunned and downcast prophet, the great city in sight, and shining in the sun, the low of hundreds of cattle in his ears, the bitter wind in his eyes and in his hair, disappointment and chagrin in his heart, and, hanging over his naked head, the frag-

ments of the withered plant. Who would care to go and to sit down along with him?

And yet not a few *have* gone and sat beside Jonah under that shade of tattered fire. The fierce, hopeless infidel, who would, like Cain, kill his brother because he cannot comprehend his God; the dogmatist, who has learned his "lesson of despair" so thoroughly that the ease with which he recites it seems a voucher for its truth; the gloomy Christian, who lingers many a needless hour around the skirts of Sinai, instead of seeing its summits sinking afar off in the distance; the victim of vanity and disappointment, who has confounded his voice and identified its rejection with the voice and the rejection of God; the misanthrope, who says, "Would that all men were liars!" and the fanatic, who grieves that the heavens do not respond to his vindictive feelings, and leave him and his party standing alone in the solitude which the race has left,—such, and others, have partaken of the momentary madness and shared in the dreary shelter of the prophet.

He, we trust, arose from under the gourd, and humbled, melted, instructed, resumed the grand functions of his office. It is of comparatively little moment whether he did or not, as the principles inscribed on his prophecy remain in any case the same. These are, first, to fly from duty is to fly to danger; secondly, deliverance from danger often conducts to new and tenfold perils and involves tenfold responsibilities; thirdly, a duty delayed is a duty doubled; fourthly, the one voice of an earnest man is a match for millions; fifthly, an error in the truest prophet can degrade his character and cast a shade of doubt upon his name; and sixthly, God would rather lower the good report of any of his messengers than endanger one syllable of his own recorded name—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to anger."

# XXVII.

## UZZIAH.

UZZIAH was only sixteen years old when placed upon the throne. He must have possessed good counselors, for he grew up to be a man of great qualities, and was a wise and good ruler. He sought the Lord and listened to the prophets, and while he did this he prospered. The temple-worship was restored and the building beautified. He also rebuilt the broken walls of Jerusalem, and erected towers at the corners, strongly fortified. Uzziah also encouraged agriculture. Husbandmen and vine-dressers, green fields and flocks of cattle, were seen over the land of Judah. Wells were dug in deserts; towers built for the protection of his borders; and once more peace and plenty comforted the hearts of the sons of Judah.

His army was in excellent discipline, and numbered three hundred and seven thousand five hundred men. Over these were set two thousand six hundred captains. They were all armed with shields, spears, helmets, habergeons, bows and slings. With this army, the king of Judah set out to attack the old enemies of his people, the Philistines. The cities of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod were destroyed and the people thoroughly humbled. Cities were built to keep them in submission.

Uzziah also defeated the Arabians, and recovered the port of Elah, on the Red Sea. His kingdom was now in the most flourishing condition. The Ammonites, fearing him, brought in great gifts. His power and wisdom spread abroad as far as

Egypt, and he was feared and held in reverence by his people and the nations around. Isaiah, the great prophet, was then in Jerusalem, and said to the people, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; for out of Zion shall go forth the law."

In the prosperity of the reign of Uzziah there were some dark spots, of which the historical books report hardly anything, but of which the writings of the contemporary prophets are full, and which led the way to the rapid decline of the next period. There was the tremendous, ever-memorable visitation of locusts. It came, like all such visitations, in the season of unusual drought —a drought which passed over the country like flames of fire. The locusts came from the north. The brightness of the Eastern sky was suddenly darkened as if by thick clouds on the mountain-tops. They moved like a gigantic army; they all seemed to be impelled by one mind, as if acting under one word of command; they flew as if on horses and chariots from hill to hill; never breaking their ranks, they climbed over the walls of cities into the windows of houses. The purple vine, the green fig tree, the gray olive, the scarlet pomegranate, the golden corn, the waving palm, the fragrant citron, vanished before them, and the trunks and branches were left bare and white by their devouring teeth. What had been but a few moments before like the garden of Eden was turned into a desolate wilderness. Joel i. 12, 18. The herds of cattle and flocks of sheep so dear to the shepherds of Judah, the husbandmen so dear to King Uzziah, were reduced to starvation. The flour and oil for the "meat-offerings" failed; even the temple lost its accustomed sacrifices. It was a calamity so great that it seemed as though none could be greater. It "had not been in their days, nor in the days of their fathers;" "there had never been the like, neither would there be any more after it, even to the years of many generations."

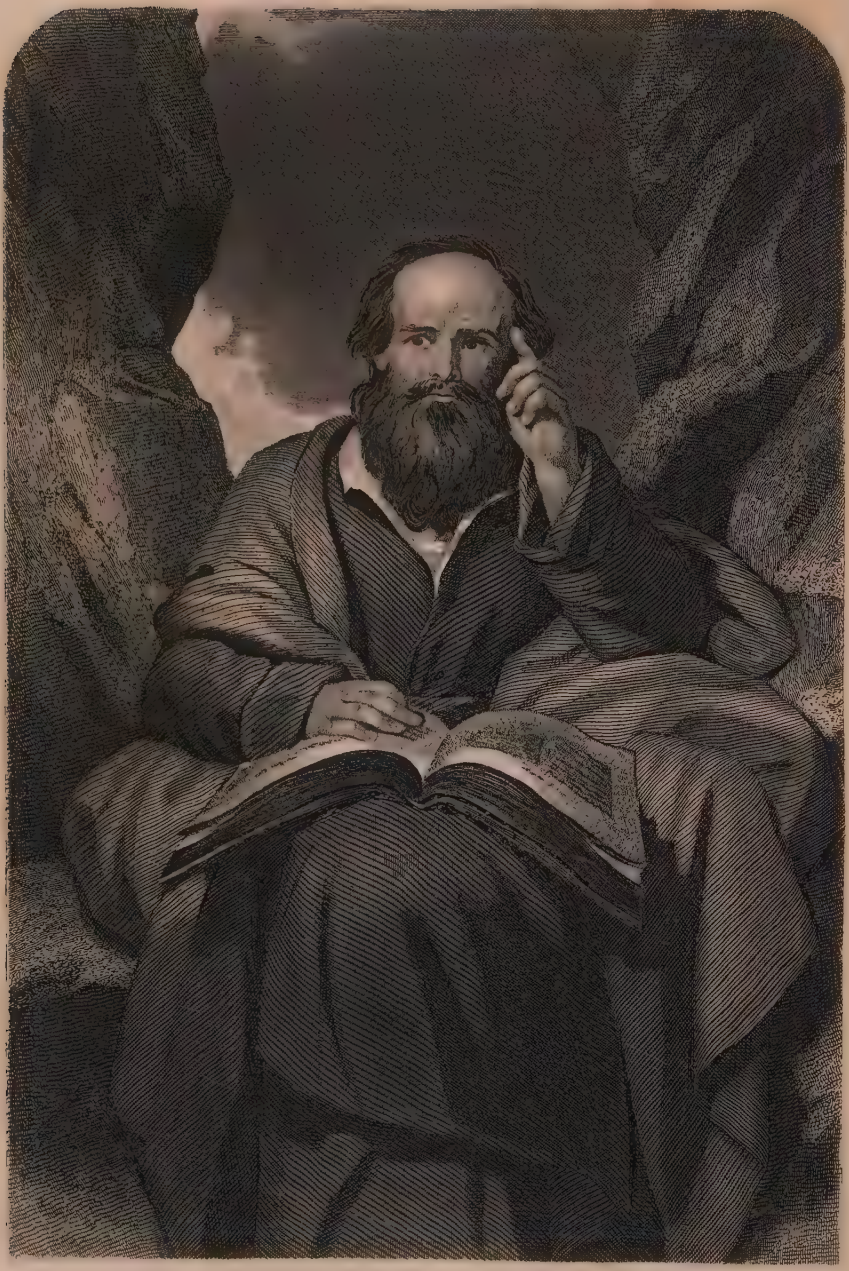
It must have been in the kingdom of Judah what the drought of Ahab's reign had been in the kingdom of Israel. It was a

day of divine judgment, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. The harsh blast of the consecrated ram's horn called an assembly for an extraordinary fast. Joel ii. 1. Not a soul was to be absent. Like the fiery cross, it convened old and young, men and women, mothers with infants at their breast, the bridegroom and the bride on their bridal day. All were there, stretched in front of the altar. The altar itself presented the dreariest of all sights—a hearth without its sacred fire, a table spread without its sacred feast. The priestly caste, instead of gathering as usual upon its steps and its platform, were driven, as it were, to the farther space; they turned their backs to the dead altar, and lay prostrate, gazing toward the invisible Presence within the sanctuary. Instead of the hymns and music which, since the time of David, had entered into their prayers, there was nothing heard but the passionate sobs and the loud dissonant howls such as only an Eastern hierarchy could utter. Instead of the mass of white mantles which they usually presented, they were wrapt in black goat's-hair sackcloth, twisted round them not with the brilliant sashes of the priestly attire, but with a rough girdle of the same texture, which they never unbound night or day. Joel i. 13. What they wore of their common dress was rent asunder or cast off. With bare breasts they waved their black drapery toward the temple, and shrieked aloud, "Spare thy people, O Lord!"

There was yet another calamity which left a deeper impression on the contemporary writers and on later tradition—"the earthquake," as it was emphatically called. Amos i. 1. The whole prophetic imagery of the time is colored by the anticipations or recollections of this memorable event. Mountains and valleys are cleft asunder and melt as in a furnace (Mic. i. 4); the earth heaving like the rising waters of the Nile; the sea bursting over the land; the ground shaking and sliding as, with a succession of shocks, its solid framework reels to and fro like a drunkard. The day is overclouded by thick darkness, without a glimmering

of light. There is the roar as of a lion from the caverns of Jerusalem. There is an overthrow like that which overthrew the Cities of the Plain. Zech. xiv. 5, 6.

It was on some high national solemnity that Uzziah—elated, according to the chronicler, by his successes, but certainly in conformity with the precedents of David and Solomon—entered the temple, clothed, according to Josephus, in priestly attire, with the intention of offering incense on the golden altar within the sacred building. Whether it was that, in the changes that had elapsed since the reign of Solomon, the custom had dropped, or whether Uzziah entered upon it in a haughty and irritating spirit, or whether the priestly order, since their accession of power through the influence of Jehoiada, claimed more than their predecessors had claimed in former times, it is said that the high priest Azariah, with eighty colleagues, positively forbade the king's entrance, on the ground that this was a privilege peculiar to the priestly office. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. At this moment, according to Josephus, the shock of the earthquake broke upon the city. Its more distant effects were visible long afterward. A huge mass of the mountain on the south-east of Jerusalem rolled down to the spring of Enrogel, and blocked up the approaches of the valley of the Kedron and the royal gardens. Its immediate effect, if rightly reported, was still more striking. As has happened in like calamities, even in Jerusalem itself, the solid building of the temple rocked, its roof opened, the darkness of its inner recess was suddenly lighted up by the full blaze of the sun, and as the king looked up toward it, a leprous disfigurement mounted into his face, and rendered necessary that exclusion which, on the ground of his royal descent, had been doubtful. He retired at once from the temple, never again to enter it, and for the remainder of his life, as one of the accursed race, remained secluded within the public infirmary. His grave was apart from the public vaults, in the adjacent field.



*Jeremiah*

# XXVIII.

## ISAIAH.

ISAIAH stands out at once as the representative of his own age, and yet as a universal teacher of mankind. Whilst the other prophets of the period in which he lived are known only to the bypaths of theology, in the quaint texts of remote preachers, Isaiah is a household word everywhere. For the first time since Elisha we have a prophet of whose life and aspect we can be said to have any details. He was statesman as well as prophet. He lived not in the remote villages of Judah like Micah, or wandering over hill and dale like Elijah and Amos, but in the centre of all political life and activity. His whole thoughts take the color of Jerusalem. He is the first prophet specially attached to the capital and the court. He was, according to Jewish tradition, the cousin of Uzziah, his father Amoz being held to be a younger son of Joash. He wrote Uzziah's life, and his first prophecies, beginning in the close of that reign, illustrate the reign of Jotham as well as of the three succeeding sovereigns. His individual and domestic life was a kind of impersonation of the prophetic office. His wife was a prophetess. According to a practice which seems to have prevailed throughout his career, as through that of his contemporary Hosea, he himself and his children all bear prophetic names: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for a sign and a wonder in Israel from the Lord of hosts." He had a circle of disciples (Isa. viii. 16)—probably of prophets—in

whom his spirit was long continued. The length of his life, the grandeur of his social position, gave a force to what he said beyond what was possible in the fleeting addresses of the humbler prophets who had preceded him. There is a royal air in his attitude, in his movements, in the sweep of his vision, which commands attention. He was at once "great and faithful" in his "vision." Nothing escapes him in the events of his time. The older prophetic writings are worked up by him into his own words. He does not break with the past. He is not ashamed of building on the foundation of those who have gone before him. All that there is of general instruction in Joel, Micah or Amos is reproduced in Isaiah. But his style has its own marked peculiarity and novelty. The fierce, impassioned addresses of Joel and Nahum, the abrupt strokes, the contorted turns, of Hosea and Amos, give way to something more of a continuous flow, where stanza succeeds to stanza and canto to canto with almost a natural sequence. Full of imagery as is his poetry, it still has a simplicity which was at that time so rare as to provoke the satire of the more popular prophets. They, pushing to excess the nervous rhetoric of their predecessors, could not bear, as they expressed it, to be treated like children. "Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." Those constant recurrences of the general truths of spiritual religion, majestic in their plainness, seemed to them mere commonplace repetitions—"precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." It is the universal complaint of the shallow, inflated rhetoricians of the professedly religious world against original genius and apostolic simplicity, the complaint of the babblers of Ephesus against St. John, the protest of all scholastic and pedantic systems against the freeness and the breadth of a greater than John or Isaiah. Such divine utterances have always appeared defective and unimpassioned and indefinite in the ears of

those who crave for wilder excitement and more elaborate systems, but have no less found, for that very reason, a sure response in the childlike, genuine, natural soul of every age.

The general objects of Isaiah's mission are best indicated in the account which he himself has left us of his call, or (as we should now describe it) his conversion to the prophetical office.

"In the year that King Uzziah died"—in the last year of that long reign of fifty-two years—as the life of the aged king, now on the verge of seventy, was drawing to its close in the retirement of the house of lepers, the young Isaiah was, or in vision seemed to be, in the court of the temple. He stood at the gate of the porch and gazed straight into the holy place, and into the holy of holies itself. All the intervening obstacles were removed. The great gates of cedar-wood were thrown open, the many-colored veil that hung before the innermost sanctuary was drawn aside, and deep within was a throne as of a king, high and lifted up, towering as if into the sky. What was the form that sat thereon, here, as elsewhere, the Scripture forbears to describe. Only by outward and inferior images, as to us by secondary causes, could the Divine Essence be expressed. The long drapery of his train filled the temple, as "his glory fills the earth." Around the throne, as the cherubs on each side of the mercy-seat, as the guards round the king, with head and feet veiled, figures floated like flying serpents, themselves glowing with the glory of which they were a part, whilst vast wings enfolded their faces and their feet, and supported them in mid-air around the throne. From side to side went up a hymn of praise, which has since been incorporated in the worship of Christendom, and which expressed that He was there who bore the great name specially appropriated to the period of the Jewish monarchy and to the prophetical order—"the Lord of hosts." The sound of their voices rang like thunder to the extremity of the temple. The pillars of the gateway trembled as if in another earthquake-shock, and the whole building within grew dark as with the smoke of a vast

sacrifice. It was a sight and sound which the youthful Isaiah recognized at once as the intimation of divinity. It was the revelation of the Divine Presence to him, as that of the burning bush to Moses, or of the still small voice to Elijah—the inevitable prelude to a prophetic mission, couched in the form most congenial to his own character and situation. To him, the royal prophet of Jerusalem, this manifestation of royal splendor was the almost necessary vesture in which the spiritual truth was to be clothed. All his own sins—we know not what they were—and the sins of his nation—as we know them from himself and the contemporary prophets—passed before him, and he said, "Woe is me, for I am lost, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." On these defiled lips, therefore, the purifying touch was laid. From the flaming altar the flaming seraph brought a flaming coal. This was the creation, so to speak, of that marvelous style which has entranced the world—the burning furnace which warms, as with a central fire, every variety of his addresses. Then came the voice from the sanctuary, saying, "Whom shall I send? who will go for us?" With unhesitating devotion the youth replied, "Here am I; send me." In the words that follow is represented the whole of the prophet's career. First, he is forewarned of the forlorn hopelessness of his mission. The louder and more earnest is his cry, the less will they hear and understand; the more clearly he sets the vision of truth before them, the less will they see. "Make the heart of this people gross, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and healed." These mournful words, well known to us through their fivefold repetition in the New Testament as the description of the Jewish people in its latest stage of decay, were doubtless true in the highest degree of that wayward generation to which Isaiah was called to speak. His spirit sank within him, and he

asked, "O Lord, how long?" The reply unfolded at once the darker and the brighter side of the future. Not till successive invasions had wasted the cities—not till the houses had been left without a human being within them—not till the land had been desolate with desolation—would a better hope dawn; not till the invasions of Pekah and Sennacherib had done their work—not till ten out of the twelve tribes had been removed far away, and there should have been a great forsaking in the midst of the land—would he be relieved from the necessity of delivering his stern but fruitless warnings against the idolatry, the dullness, the injustice of his people. But widely spread and deeply seated as was the national corruption, there was still a sound portion left, which would live on and flourish. As the aged oak or terebinth of Palestine may be shattered and cut down to the very roots, and yet out of the withered stump a new shoot may spring forth and grow into a mighty and vigorous tree, so is the holy seed, the faithful few, of the chosen people. This is the true consolation of all ecclesiastical history. It is a thought which is but little recognized in its earlier and ruder stages, when the inward and outward are easily confounded together. But it is the very message of life to a more refined and complex age, and it was the key-note to the whole of Isaiah's prophecies. It had, indeed, been dimly indicated to Elijah, in the promise of the few who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and in the still small whisper which was greater than thunder, earthquake and fire. But in Isaiah's time it first, if we may say so, became a living doctrine of the Jewish Church, and through him an inheritance of the Christian Church. "A *remnant*—the remnant:" this was his watchword. "The remnant shall return." This was the truth constantly personified before him in the name of his eldest son—a remnant of good in the mass of corruption, a remnant saved from the destructive invasions of Assyria, a burst of spring-time in the reformation of Hezekiah, and, far away in the distant future, a rod out of the stem, the worn-out stem, of Jesse—a

branch, a genuine branch, out of the withered root of David: "And the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, even with joy and singing, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Such was the hope and trust which sustained the prophet through his sixty years of toil and conflict. In the weakness of Ahaz, in the calamities of Hezekiah, under the tyranny of Manasseh, Isaiah remained firm and steadfast to the end. Wider and wider his views opened as the nearer prospects of his country grew darker and darker. First of the prophets, he and those who followed him seized with unreserved confidence the mighty thought that, not in the chosen people so much as in the nations outside of it, was to be found the ultimate well-being of man, the surest favor of God. Truly might the apostle say that Isaiah was "very bold"—"bold beyond" all that had gone before him—in enlarging the boundaries of the Church—bold with that boldness and large with that largeness of view which, so far from weakening the hold on things divine, strengthens it to a degree unknown in less comprehensive minds; for to him also, with a distinctness which makes all other anticipations look pale in comparison—a distinctness which grew with his advancing years—was revealed the coming of a Son of David who should restore the royal house of Judah and gather the nations under its sceptre. If some of these predictions belong to that phase of the Israelite hope of an earthly empire which was doomed to disappointment and reversal, yet the larger part point to a glory which has been more than realized. Lineament after lineament of that divine Ruler was gradually drawn by Isaiah or his scholars, until at last a Figure stands forth, so marvelously combined of power and gentleness and suffering as to present, in the united proportions of his descriptions, the moral features of an historical Person such as has been, by universal confession, known once, and once only, in the subsequent annals of the world.

The task laid upon the prophet was difficult, the times were dark; but his reward has been that, in spite of the opposition, the contempt and the ridicule of his contemporaries, he has in after ages been regarded as the messenger, not of sad, but of glad, tidings—the evangelical prophet, the prophet of the gospel, in accordance with the meaning of his own name, which he himself regarded as charged with prophetic significance—"the divine salvation."

No other prophet is so frequently cited in the New Testament, for none other so nearly comes up to the spirit of Christ and the apostles. No other single teacher of the Jewish Church has so worked his way into the heart of Christendom. When Augustine asked Ambrose which of the sacred books was best to be studied after his conversion, the answer was, "Isaiah." The greatest musical composition of modern times, embodying more than any single confession of faith the sentiments of the whole Christian Church, is based, in far the larger part, on the prophecies of Isaiah. The wild tribes of New Zealand seized his magnificent strains as if belonging to their own national songs, and chanted them from hill to hill with all the delight of a newly-discovered treasure. And as in his age, so in our own, he must be pre-eminently regarded as "the bard rapt into future times." None other of ancient days so fully shared with the modern philosopher or reformer or pastor the sorrowful yet exalted privilege of standing, as we say, "in advance of his age," "before his time." Through his prophetic gaze we may look forward across a dark and stormy present to the onward destiny of our race, "when the eyes of them that see shall not be dim—when the ears of them that hear shall hearken—when the vile person shall no more be called liberal nor the churl said to be bountiful—when the liberal shall devise liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand—when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim—when thine eyes shall behold the King in his beauty, and see the land that is very far off."

# XXIX.

## HEZEKIAH.

ALL the kings of Israel were bad men, without one exception. And so too were most of the kings of Judah. There were, however, a *few* pious sovereigns among them—a little wheat among the chaff. Hezekiah was perhaps the most remarkable. Of him it was said, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him of all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

He came to the throne at a time when the nation had sunk very low. Their earthly greatness had almost passed away; and as for their religious state, the people were given up to the grossest idol-worship.

It was a happy day for the land of Judah when Ahaz died and Hezekiah mounted the throne. He began to reign when he was only twenty-five years old. He had been taught no lessons of holiness by his father Ahaz, but rather the reverse; but in spite of this, he seems to have been one who had the fear of God before his eyes and the grace of God in his heart. Perhaps his mother, Abijah, was a godly woman, and her example and her prayers may have been blest to the young prince.

We can hardly tell what amount of good comes to a child from a mother's piety and a mother's prayers. Many a son owes to them all that makes his present life a useful and a happy one, and all that brightens his path toward another world. Great indeed is the influence of a religious mother; her words of wisdom

and piety, her kind and loving counsel, and above all, her consistent life, will oftentimes tell upon her child in years to come, when she herself perhaps may have passed into eternity. Just as a seed from some pine tree by the mountain-side may be dropped upon the surface and lie there for years, and then after a while it may spring up and become one of the noblest ornaments of the forest, so it may have been with Hezekiah. The seed, it may be, was sown by his mother, and he grew up to be an honored servant of God and a peculiar blessing to his people.

One of his first acts was to open for worship the temple which his wicked father had actually closed, taking away some of the sacred vessels used for religious worship and destroying the rest. Hezekiah carefully repaired the building and replaced all that was wanting, and then, having restored the priests to their office, he caused them to offer up sacrifices, in token of their sincere repentance. And all this he did so earnestly that it was said of him, "In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

But Hezekiah lived in troublous times. The proud king of Assyria had already made several attacks upon the kingdom of Judah; and on one of these occasions he sends Rabshakeh, his captain, with a letter full of boastful threats, in order to strike terror into the heart of Hezekiah and his subjects. Then it was that the simple, trusting faith of the Jewish king specially shone forth. He was very much alarmed both for himself and for his people; but he knew that the Lord was his truest counselor, and he went, we are told, and "spread his letter before him."

Thus his faith is strengthened and his fears removed, and he is assured that both he and his people are safe under the Lord's protection; and whilst he uses every possible means for the defence of his country—building up the city walls, which had been broken down, repairing the fortress and arming his troops—he at the same time reminds his people that their trust must not be in

an arm of flesh, but in the Lord's promised aid. "Be strong," he says, "and courageous. Be not dismayed for the king of Assyria. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

And well would it be for us if it was our habit thus to carry our wants to God—if we made him our Guide and Counselor in all our ways. What a relief would it often be to our troubled minds to place our concerns in his hands, feeling that where he leads us is the path of safety!

O God, teach us to trust thee! Show us the way wherein we should go! And may we ever cast our care upon thee, for thou carest for us!

But Hezekiah was a poor weak man, like one of ourselves. He *fell sick*, as we may; and he *fell into sin*, as we too are liable to fall; for there are but few among us who "always stand upright."

We will speak of his *sin* first. It happened that the king of Babylon sent some ambassadors on an errand of kindness to Hezekiah. He appears to have been so pleased and flattered by this compliment that he gave way for the moment to a feeling of pride. He showed the ambassadors all his treasures, and, like David, he gloried in the multitude of his people and the number of his armies. Hitherto his trust had been in God, but now it was in his riches. This displeased the Lord, and he sent Isaiah, the faithful prophet, to tell him that, as a mark of his displeasure, all his treasures and his children should one day be carried to Babylon.

We are told that God "left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart," and for a moment he seemed to give way and to fall beneath the trial. His footsteps wellnigh slipped, but God in his mercy upheld him, so that he was not utterly cast down; for we read that he afterward "humbled himself for the pride of his heart;" and again it is written, "Did not Hezekiah, king of Judah, fear the Lord, and besought

the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced?"

And now we will speak of Hezekiah's *sickness.* God visits him with a sore disease which brings him to the very brink of the grave. The great king is stretched on a sick-bed. And see how he shines in adversity!—how he comes forth as gold when placed in the furnace! He now feels the blessing and comfort of prayer. He once more spreads his case before the Lord. He turns away from the mourning attendants who crowd round his bed, and pours out his heart to that heavenly Friend who was ever near him. God is entreated of him, his earnest cry is heard, and an answer of peace is given him. A few more years are added to his life, and a miracle is wrought to strengthen his faith.

"Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me"—this was one of Hezekiah's prayers. And how much there is in that single petition! Are we at any time oppressed? Are we weighed down by trouble and sorrow? Let us simply throw ourselves on God, and ask him to undertake our cause and deal with us according to his own will. Above all, if sin oppresses us, and we feel it to be a burden too heavy for us to bear, let us remember there is One who has "undertaken for us," and whose precious blood can wash away our deepest stains.

But little is told us of Hezekiah's death. We may conclude, however, that he departed in peace. God, who was with him as he journeyed through life, forsook him not as that journey closed. His memory, too, was honored. It is said concerning him that "he slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death."

It matters not to a child of God how men may speak of him after his death; it signifies little to him whether his body is laid in the open field or finds its resting-place in a whited sepulchre; but still, for the sake of others, he desires to leave a fair name behind him, and to be honored as a servant of God.

# XXX

## JOSIAH.

NO king came so early to the throne of Judah as King Josiah. At the tender age of eight years he found himself the ruler of that great nation. His father, Amon, had been a wicked sovereign, and was so hated by his subjects that they conspired against him and slew him in his own palace.

Concerning the first few years of the young king's reign we are told scarcely anything, but the little that is said is enough to show us that even at this early age he gave proof of decided piety. We are told that "he did *that which was right* in the sight of the Lord." This seems to have been his determination through life, and a blessed determination it was. He had seen how wrongly his father had acted; and though he probably felt that he had a very difficult course to take, yet he was resolved *to do right* whatever it might cost him. He appears to have kept before his eyes the bright example of his ancestor David, and God enabled him to walk closely in his steps.

It is a goodly sight to see a man *of any age* giving himself to God's service and shaping his life according to his laws; but when we see this *in a young person*, it does indeed rejoice our hearts and fill us with special thankfulness. Josiah was young, very young, but not too young to be useful—not too young to be ranked among God's servants—not too young to be a great blessing to his country.

What a mistake it is to suppose that religion is only for those who are advanced in life, and that it is time enough to give our hearts to God when we have lost our relish for the world! Can we too soon begin to walk in the right way? Can we too soon enjoy the favor of our Father above? May not even children know the Saviour, and experience that peace which he has to give? If Samuel, Josiah and others could now speak to us, they would tell us that we cannot begin too early or too earnestly to seek the Lord.

During Josiah's boyhood he was probably under the guardianship of those who undertook his education; but when he reached his sixteenth year, he began to act for himself. He had looked with sorrow on the sad state of things in Judah and Jerusalem; he saw the land filled with the temples of Baal, and his people more or less given up to idolatry; and now he longed himself to serve God, and to lead those committed to his care to serve him also.

One of his first acts was to get rid of the heathen temples and to establish a purer worship throughout the country. This was, of course, no easy matter. Idolatry had got root in the nation, and it was difficult to pluck it up. Here one and there another violently opposed him, but his fixed determination to "*do that which was right*" carried him through. He felt—as a man always does feel who is doing God's will—he felt sure that God would be with him and that God would help him.

But it was not enough to put down idolatry. Josiah did not stop there. He was anxious not only to restrain his people from doing what was wrong, but to lead them to do what was right. The temple, the Lord's house, had long been utterly neglected and had been allowed to fall into ruin; so he at once encouraged those who were well disposed to assist him in raising money to repair it, and the carpenters and the masons were forthwith set to work in earnest. In a short time all was ready for the service of God, and Josiah had the happiness of seeing the Lord's

house and the Lord's service once more honored as they should be.

And now an important discovery is made. Hilkiah, the high priest, on looking over some of the papers which had probably been laid by in the temple, finds a copy of the Book of the Law. This book had been written by Moses, and most likely had been lost or hidden during those years when idolatry prevailed. This was indeed a most valuable discovery, and he at once carries it to the king.

A discovery somewhat like this was made in later years, at the time of the Reformation. In a convent in Germany there was a certain monk who could find no peace in the false doctrines of the Church of Rome, to which he belonged. This was Martin Luther. One day, when he was in the library of the convent, among a heap of books he happened to find a solitary copy of the word of God. There it had lain neglected and unread. But now he found that he had indeed discovered a treasure. That book was the means of opening his eyes, and led him to go forth and preach the glorious doctrines of the gospel.

And so, too, the discovery of the Book of the Law was of great importance to Josiah, and greatly helped forward his work. He had not, as Luther had, the books of the prophets and of the New Testament, for these were not yet written; but he had enough to show how greatly his people had offended God by their neglect of him, and how his worship might be restored.

Picture to yourself Shaphan the scribe hastening to his royal master with the precious treasure in his hands, and then reading it out before him. It is said, "When the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes." And why so? Because it showed him even more plainly than he had seen before how grievously his people had departed from the good and right way, and how the whole nation had called down the Lord's anger upon them.

He immediately calls together the priests and others, and

desires them to go and lay the matter before a certain prophetess named Huldah. She was, no doubt, a holy person, whom Josiah respected, and he was anxious to have her counsel and advice.

Huldah returned a faithful answer by the hand of these messengers. She did not shrink from announcing the truth, however unwelcome it might be. She plainly declared that God's wrath would come down upon the people of Judah, according to his word, but that during the good king's life he would mercifully spare them.

And now what was to be done? How was Josiah to act? Must he give up all in despair? Must he content himself with empty complaining? No; he determined to do *the thing that was right.* Down went the few remaining idols in the land. The groves and temples of Baal disappeared; they were all swept away. Then the king gathers all the chief men together, and goes with them into the house of the Lord. He himself stands against one of the pillars, reads to them the book which had been found, and persuades them, one and all, to join him in making a solemn covenant that they would henceforth faithfully and truly serve God.

Such were the steps taken by this good king to restore true religion among his subjects. "Like unto him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."

There were troubles soon coming upon Judah; but God, according to his promise, withheld the storm during Josiah's lifetime. The reign of this prince was "like a gleam of light cast from the burning sky before it bursts with the tempest." There was a little time of peace and prosperity for the Jews as long as he lived; but no sooner was he gone than they fell back into their evil ways, and the wrath of God came upon them.

# XXXI.

## JEREMIAH.

SCARCELY can a greater contrast be imagined than that existing between the two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah. The one, vigorous, lofty and animated in his style of writing; the other, pathetic, elegant and mournful. There was probably something in the original cast of mind in these two prophets, respectively, which caused so wide a difference. The Spirit of God, however, can employ all the gifts of his servants, however widely they may be varied, and turn every kind of talent and temper to a sanctified use. Persons of the most timid and shrinking nature may render services not less important than the bold and ardent.

Very different feelings were experienced, moreover, by the two prophets at the time of their special call to the prophetic office. Isaiah was overpowered by a sense of his unworthiness: "Woe is me," he cries, "for I am undone!" Jeremiah, on the other hand, was depressed by the feeling of his unfitness; he said, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." We see, in truth, throughout the whole course of Jeremiah, a general air of melancholy and dejection. His natural temperament, and the circumstances in which he was placed, both combined to lower the tone of his spirits.

Yet he had a high charge committed to him. He relates: "The Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee

thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." There are several circumstances to be noticed, some of them of a friendly, others of an unfriendly, nature in the treatment which Jeremiah experienced.

The unfriendliness—and that of the worst sort—which Jeremiah suffered was from the people and their rulers.

In the ears of the people he was continually sounding the alarm and rousing them to conviction of sin: "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

The requital, moreover, which he had from the people of Judah, was such as might be expected from inveterate and hardened sinners. They mocked and defied him, saying, "Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now." He with tenderness of spirit appeals to God, saying, "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee." Then they plotted against him; they said, "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Even his fellow-townsmen, the villagers of "poor Anathoth," with

subtlety conspired against his life. "But I was," says Jeremiah, "like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered." When on one occasion he was put into the stocks, there was a remarkable conflict in the mind of Jeremiah between principle and feeling. He felt that he was in derision daily, and he was almost tempted to throw up his commission and quit God's service. He exclaimed, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name;" but he adds, "His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him." Thus did he strengthen himself in God; for he says, "Unto thee have I opened my cause." And then he adds, triumphantly, as one who had overcome a severe temptation, "Sing unto the Lord; praise ye the Lord: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil doers."

But this persecution was carried to a far more dangerous extremity when at length the king and the court took part against the prophet. At a later period (for Jeremiah prophesied not less than forty years) the king and his princes began to suspect him of treasonable practices against his country. Nor was the suspicion altogether unnatural; for, by the word of the Lord, Jeremiah declared that those Jews should be safe, and those only, who should quit the city and go over to the army of their enemies the Chaldeans: "Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for

this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do anything against you. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire." It is in reference to this event in his life that the following words seem to have been penned: "They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life." Lam. iii. 53–58.

Such, generally speaking, were the adverse and afflictive circumstances attendant on Jeremiah's ministry. He lived also to witness and most pathetically to lament over the destruction of the holy city and the captivity of the people of the Lord. A more touching composition exists not in the Old Testament (a few, perhaps, of the Psalms excepted) than the book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. In the third chapter of it we seem to behold the very picture of the prophet sitting amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, his countenance furrowed with grief, his eyes streaming with tears, and yet his heart meekly bowing beneath the just judgments of the Lord: "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." Yet he submissively and thankfully adds, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Never did any one more need that truth, which after-

ward was spoken by our Lord to his disciples—"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

Happily, there were alleviating circumstances in the prophet's lot. A spirit of friendliness existed toward him, even in quarters where it was least to be expected.

First, we find that Zedekiah the king—the very person who gave him up to death—had at different times many relentings of heart. He ordered that the prophet should be supplied with bread daily, until all the bread in the city was spent. He also sent for him secretly, more than once, to inquire, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Thus he showed that even wicked men have conscience enough to trouble them; while God often works by means of their fears, their scruples and their natural feelings of humanity, to protect his faithful servants.

But the chief friend of Jeremiah, in the crisis of his peril, was Ebed-melech, an attendant on the king's household—an Ethiopian, not a Jew—who most unexpectedly interested himself to save the life of the prophet. He went in boldly to Zedekiah, and said, "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city." Such interference, and from such a man, might have given mortal offence; but God overruled it for good, and the pious humanity of this stranger was afterward well recompensed. The king, who seems to have been an irresolute man, and easily led right or wrong, immediately yielded to this request, which had both justice and mercy to recommend it: "Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence the old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And Ebed-melech the

Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison." This good action of Ebed-melech is distinctly declared by God to have been a work of faith. He was not a Jew outwardly, but, which is far better, he was a Jew inwardly—a believer in the God of Israel in heart and in spirit. And his reward was treasured up for him against an evil time; for when Jerusalem was taken, this promise of mercy to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian was not forgotten by God: "I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." His faith in God had emboldened him to espouse the cause of the afflicted prophet at the hazard of punishment; he was now recompensed with that which to every man is the dearest of all things—his own life. He had been the means of sparing Jeremiah; now the Lord spares him, while the king and thousands of Jews perished by war and famine or went into captivity. Beautifully is that truth exemplified in Ebed-melech's case—"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

There was another favorable circumstance in Jeremiah's situation—namely, that he had a personal friend—one like-minded with himself—in the prophet Baruch. Probably he was younger than Jeremiah; certainly he stood in the relation of the prophet's assistant, for when Jeremiah was shut up in prison, he dictated the word of the Lord, and Baruch wrote it in a roll of a book. This roll contained most awful threatenings against the king, princes, priests and people of Jerusalem. It was carried and read to the king Jehoiakim. He in his rage, as soon as three or four leaves had been read, cut it with a penknife and cast it into the fire; after which Jeremiah indited a second roll to Baruch,

the same with the first, but with additions full of lamentations and mourning and woe. Jeremiah and Baruch were in no small danger on this occasion, the king having commanded to seize them; "but," it is significantly added, "the Lord hid them."

These two prophets, brethren in faithfulness and affliction, seem to have been likewise of a kindred temperament—prone to sadness. This may be inferred from the short but pointed message sent to Baruch by the Lord and pronounced by Jeremiah. We read, "The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest." The Lord then confirms all his threatened judgments, pleading with Baruch in these striking words: "And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." Possibly Baruch might have pleased his mind with high notions, following as he did in the train of a great prophet, and delivering messages, although severe ones, in kings' palaces. If he imagined himself to be of some importance, or that he was treading the paths that lead to honor, a greater mistake he could not have committed. However this may have been, Jeremiah was directed to teach him humility in good earnest. Baruch was required to put aside every ambitious, self-exalting thought —a rule proper at all times for the servant of the Lord, but never more so than in seasons of public calamity. Meanwhile the same mercy was promised to Baruch as to Ebed-melech; when the whole nation came to ruin, he was to be safe: "Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

There is another circumstance to be noted in the history of Jeremiah, proving how gracious the Lord can show himself to his devoted servants. When the king of Babylon had taken

Jerusalem, it is related that he "gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." And, consequently, "all the king of Babylon's princes" interested themselves about this poor prophet: "Even they sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people." The Lord made him to be pitied of all those that carried away the nation captive into Babylon.

Concerning the writings of Jeremiah, it may be observed that, having originally been addressed to backsliding Israel, they are peculiarly adapted to comfort, restore and establish those who for a season have departed from the Lord, but are longing to return to him. This book and the prophecy of Hosea together form a treasury inexpressibly valuable and consolatory to penitent backsliders.

We may observe further that it would be a great error to impute to Jeremiah anything like pusillanimity; so far from it, he was on all proper occasions remarkable for courage. Nowhere shall we find more energetic descriptions of what a prophet ought to be than in the twenty-third chapter of his prophecy; and what he described, he himself was. "Mine heart within me," he says, "is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake." Then, challenging these blind guides of Israel, he bursts out into the noblest language of encouragement, urging himself and all like-minded with him faithfully to discharge their arduous duties: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

# XXXII.

## EZEKIEL.

WHO dare claim kindred with Ezekiel, the severe, the mystic, the unfathomable, the lonely, whose hot, hurried breath we feel approaching us like the breath of a furnace? Perhaps the eagle may, for his eye was as keen and as fierce as hers. Perhaps the lion may, for his voice, too, sounded vast and hollow on the wilderness wind. Perhaps the wild ass may, for his step was, like hers, incontrollable. Or does he not turn away proudly from all these, and looking up, demand as associates the most fervid of the burning ones—those who, of the angelic throng, stand the nearest, and yet blench the least, before the throne of God? Does he not cry, as he sees the seven angels holding the seven last vials of divine wrath, and coming forth from the "smoke of the glory of God," "These are my brethren;" be mine to mingle with them, to be clean as these, and to bear a like "vessel of the Lord" with these? Does he not wish to stand apart even from Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk and John?

The comparison of a comet, often used and generally wasted, is strikingly applicable to Ezekiel. Sharp, distinct, yet nebulous, swift, sword-shaped, blood-red, he hangs in the Old Testament sky, rather burning as a portent than shining as a prophet. It is not his magnitude or solidity, so much as his intensity and strangeness, which astonish you. It is not the amount of light he gives which you value so much, as the heat, the excitement



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and the curiosity which he produces. "From what depths, mysterious stranger, hast thou come? what are the tidings of thy shadowed yet fiery beams? and whither art thou bound?" are inevitable questions to ask at him, although the answers have not yet fully arrived. He is a treasury of gold and gems, but triple-barred, and guarded by watching seraphim.

The comet, then, is but a fiery sword protecting a system behind it. To burst beyond a boundary so sternly fixed, and expound the heights and depths of his meaning, is not our purpose. We shall be satisfied if we can catch the outline of the guardian shape.

Mark, first, the lofty and visionary groundwork of his prophecy. It is the record of a succession of trances. The prophet usually hangs high between earth and the regions of the ethereal. A scenery gigantic as that of dreams, select as that of pictures, rich as that of fancy and distinct as that of nature surrounds his motions and swims before his eye. The shapes which he had seen in the temple come back upon his captive vision, but come back altered in form, enlarged in size and shining in the radiance of the divine glory. How terrific the composite of the four living creatures, with their four faces and wings, seen amid a confusion of light and darkness, of still fire and leaping lightnings, of burnished brass and burning coals, coupled with the high rings of the eyed wheels, unified by the spirit moving in them all, overhung by the terrible crystal of a firmament, and that again by the sapphire throne, and that again by the similitude of a man seated upon it, surrounded, as they pursue their strait, stern path, by the girdle of a rainbow, which softens the fiery storm, and moving to the music of a multitude of waters, "as the noise of a host," which is commanded from above by a mightier, solitary voice—the voice of the Eternal! What pencil can represent to us the glory of this apparition? or who but one whose brow had been made adamant and whose eye had been cleansed with lightning could have faced it as it passed? Or shall we look at the

prophet again, seized by the form of a man's hand, lifted up by a lock of his hair between earth and heaven, and brought from Chebar to Jerusalem? or shall we follow him as he passes down the deepening abominations of his country? or shall we witness with him the man clothed with linen baptizing Jerusalem with fire? or shall we descend after him into that nameless valley, full of dry bones? or shall we take our stand beside him on that high hill, higher far than that of Mirza's vision, or than any peak in the Delectable Mountains, and see the great city on the south, or hear the rush of the holy waters, encompassing the earth?—visions these, for which the term "sublime" is lowly, and the term "poetic" poor. From heaven, in some clear future day, might be expected to fall down at once the epithets which can express their glory and the light which can explain their meaning.

We mark, next, besides his visions, a singular abundance and variety of typical acts and attitudes. Now he eats a roll of a deadly sweetness. Now he enacts a mimic siege against a tile representing Jerusalem. Now he shaves his beard and hair, burns a third part in the fire, smites a third part with a knife, scatters a third part to the winds, reserving only a few hairs as a remnant. Now he makes and shows a chain, as the worthy recompense of an evil and an insane generation. Now he prepares stuff for removing, and brings it out day after day in the sight of all. Now he stands with bread and water in his hands, but with bread, water, hands, body and head trembling, as if in some unheard storm, as a sign of coming tremors and tempests among his people. And now—sad necessity!—the desire of his eyes—his wife—is taken away by a stroke; yet God's seal is set upon his lips, forbidding him to mourn. It was the sole link binding him to earth, and, once broken, he becomes loosened and free as a column of smoke separated from the sacrifice and gilded into flame by the setting sun.

Such types suited the ardent temperament of the East. They

were its best oratorical gestures. They expressed what the waving of hands, the bending of knees and the beating of breasts could not fully do. They were solidified figures. Modern ages can show nothing equal or similar, for Burke's dagger must, by universal consent, be sheathed. But still the roll, the tile, the hair, the chain, the quaking bread and water of Ezekiel shall be preserved as specimens of an extinct tongue, the strangest and strongest ever spoken on earth.

We mark, next, with all critics, a peculiar boldness of spirit and vehemence of language. How can he fear man who had trembled not in the presence of visions the report of which on his page is yet able to bristle the hair and chill the blood? Thrown into heaven's heat, as into a furnace, he comes forth indurated to suffering and to shame—his face a flint, his "brow adamant," his eye a coal of supernatural fire. Ever afterward his style seems hurrying in chase of the "wheels," and his colors of speech are changing and gorgeous as the light which surrounded them. The first vision seen on Chebar's banks becomes his ideal, and all his after-predictions either reach, or aim at reaching, its glory. A certain rough power, too, distinguishes many of his chapters. He is "naked, and is not ashamed." As he felt bound to give a severe and literal transcript of the "things in heaven" which he saw, he conceives himself bound also literally to transcribe the things of earth and hell.

Notwithstanding this impetuosity, there comes sometimes across his jet-black lyre, with its fiery strings, a soft, beautiful music, which sounds more sweetly and strangely from the medium it has found. It is not pathos, but elegant beauty, reposing amid rude strength, like a finished statue found in an aboriginal cave. There is, for instance, a picture in the sixteenth chapter which a high judge calls the "most delicately beautiful in the written language of men": "Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod

thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." This seems a fragment of Solomon's Song; it is a jewel dropped from the forehead of his "spouse," and acts as a *foil* to the fearful minuteness of description which characterizes the rest of the chapter. In this point of his genius Ezekiel resembles Dante. Like Dante, he loves the terrible; but like Dante, too, the beautiful seems to love him.

Sprinkled, besides, amid the frequent grandeurs and rare beauties of his book, are practical appeals of close and cogent force. Such, for instance, are his picture of a watchman's duty, his parable of sour grapes, his addresses at various times to the shepherds, to the elders and to the people of Israel. From dim imaginative heights, he comes down, like Moses from the darkness of Sinai, with face shining and foot stamping out indignation against a guilty people who thought him lost upon his aërial altitudes. He is at once the most poetical and practical of preachers. This paradox has not unfrequently been exemplified in the history of preaching, as the names of Chrysostom, Taylor, Howe, Hall and Chalmers can testify. He who is able to fly upward is able to return, and with tenfold impetus, from his flight. The poet, too, has an intuitive knowledge of the springs of human nature which no study and no experience can fully supply, and which enables him, when he turns from his visions to the task, to "pierce to the dividing asunder of soul

and spirit, of the joints and marrow," and to become a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In Ezekiel's prophecy we find visions and practical exhortations almost equally blended—the dark and the clear alternate, and produce a fine chiar-oscuro, like

> "That beautiful uncertain weather,
> Where gloom and glory meet together."

On the range of prophetic mountains, overlooking the pagan lands, Ezekiel, like his brethren, has a summit, and a dark and high summit it is. The fire which he flings abroad from it comes from a "furnace heated seven times hotter" than that of the rest. He dallies with the destruction of Israel's foes; he "rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue;" he protracts the fierce luxury; he throws it out into numerous imaginative shapes, that he may multiply his pleasure. He sings in the ear of one proud oppressor the fate of a former as the forerunner of his own. He mingles a bitter irony with his denunciations. He utters, for example, a *lamentation* over Egypt; and such a lamentation!—a lamentation without sorrow, nay, full of exulting and trampling gladness. And at last, opening the wide mouth of Hades, he throws in—"heaps upon heaps"—all Israel's enemies—Pharaoh, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, the Zidonians—in "ruin reconciled," and with a shout of laughter leaves them massed together in one midnight of common destruction.

Ezekiel was a priest as well as a prophet, and alludes more frequently than any of the prophets to the ceremonial institutes of the temple. He was every inch a Jew; and none of the prophets possessed more attachment to their country, more zeal for their law and more hatred to its foes. It is not enough for him to predict the ruin of Zion's *present* enemies; he must spring forward into the future, organize and bring up from the far north a shadowy army of enemies—Gog and Magog—against the mountains of Israel, and please his insatiate spirit of patriotism by whelming them also in a vaster and a final doom. And leaving

them to their "seven months' burial," he hurries away, in the hand of God, to the very high mountain, where, in place of the fallen temple and deserted streets of Jerusalem, the new city, the new temple and the new country of the prince appear before his view, and comfort him, under the darkness of the present, by the transcendent glories of the future hovering over the history of his beloved people.

Such a being was Ezekiel—among men, but not of them—detained in the company of flesh, his feet on earth, his soul floating amid the cherubim. We have tried to describe him; but perhaps it had been our wisdom to have said only, as he heard it said to an object representing well the swiftness, strength and impetuosity of his own spirit—"O wheel!"

Amplification is asserted, by Eichhorn and others, to be the peculiarity of Ezekiel. It was as truly asserted by Hall to be the *differentia* of Burke. He no doubt describes minutely the objects before him, but this because, more than other prophets, he had *objects* visually presented, complicated and minute to describe. But his description of them is always terse and succinct; indeed, the stern literality with which he paints ideal and spiritual figures is one cause of his obscurity. He never deals with his visions artistically or by selection, but seems simply to turn his soul out before us, to photograph the dimmest of his dreams. Thus, too, Burke, from the vividness of his imagination, seems often to be rhetorically expanding and exaggerating, while, in fact, he is but severely copying from the large pictures which have arisen before his view.

We know little of this prophet's history; it is marked chiefly by the procession of his predictions as during twenty-one years they marched onward to the mountain-top, where they were abruptly closed. But we cannot successfully check our fancy as she seeks to represent to us the face and figure of this favorite prophet. We see him young, slender, long-locked, stooping as if under the burden of the Lord, with a visible fire in his eye

and cheek and an invisible fire about his motions and gestures, an earnest purpose pursuing him like a ghost, a wild beauty hanging around him like the blossom on the thorn tree, and the air of early death adding a supernatural age and dignity to his youthful aspect. We see him, as he moved through the land, a sun-gilded storm, followed by looks of admiration, wonder and fear, and unterrified by the counsel of elders, undismayed by danger or by death, climbing straight to his object. We see him at last on the mount of vision—the Pisgah of prophecy—with rapturous wonder saluting the spectacle of the mystic city and the holy waters. Then the burning soul exhales through the burning eyes, and the wearied body falls down in his own solitary chamber; for it had been indeed a "dream," but a dream true as are the future reign of Jesus and the future glory of the city and Church of God.

### JEWISH HYMN IN BABYLON.

O'er Judah's land thy thunders broke, O Lord!
The chariots rattled o'er her sunken gate,
Her sons were wasted by the Assyrian sword,
E'en her foes wept to see her fallen state;
And heaps her ivory palaces became,
Her princes wore the captive's garb of shame,
Her temple sank amid the smouldering flame,
For thou didst ride the tempest-cloud of fate.

O'er Judah's land thy rainbow, Lord, shall beam,
And the sad city lift her crownless head;
And songs shall wake, and dancing footsteps gleam,
Where broods o'er fallen streets the silence of the dead.
The sun shall shine on Salem's gilded towers,
On Carmel's side our maidens cull the flowers,
To deck, at blushing eve, their bridal bowers,
And angel feet the glittering Sion tread.

Thy vengeance gave us to the stranger's hand,
And Abraham's children were led forth for slaves;
With fetter'd steps we left our pleasant land,
Envying our fathers in their peaceful graves.

The stranger's bread with bitter tears we steep,
And when our weary eyes should sink to sleep,
'Neath the mute midnight we steal forth to weep,
Where the pale willows shade Euphrates' waves.

The born in sorrow shall bring forth in joy;
Thy mercy, Lord, shall lead thy children home;
He that went forth a tender yearling boy,
Yet, ere he die, to Salem's streets shall come.
And Canaan's vines for us their fruits shall bear,
And Hermon's bees their honeyed stores prepare;
And we shall kneel again in thankful prayer,
Where, o'er the cherub-seated God, full blazed the irradiate dome.

MILMAN.

# XXXIII.

## DANIEL.

ELIJAH, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, with other of the great seers of the Old Testament, were prophets and little else. Daniel belongs to a different order of men. He was chief counselor in a great empire. They seem to have been poor, solitary and wandering men, despised and rejected; he was the favorite of monarchs. Their predictions exposed them to danger and shame; his "dreams" drew him aloft to riches and honor. They were admitted now and then among princes because they were prophets, but his power of prophecy made him a prince. Their predictions came generally naked to their waking eyes—they were day-dreams—but his were often softened and shaded by the mist of sleep. And yet we feel justified in putting the well-conditioned and gold-hung Daniel beside the gaunt, hungry and wild-eyed sons of the prophets. Souls, and dark piercing eyes expressing similar souls, are kindred, whether they burn beneath the brows of beggars or of kings.

"Sleep on," said an unhappy literary man over the dust of Bunyan, in Bunhill-fields, "thou prince of dreamers." Prince the third he was; for while Joseph is the first, Daniel is the second, monarch in this dim dynasty. His pillow was at times a throne—the throne of his genius, the throne of empires and of all future ages. His imagination, fettered during the day by the cares of state, launched out at night into the sea of futurity, and brought home, from its remotest shores, spoils of which we are

only yet learning the value and the meaning. It was by understanding the cipher of his own dreams that he learned to expound that of others. As the poet is the best, nay, only true, critic of poetry—as the painter can best understand pictures, and the orator best appreciate, whoever else may feel, eloquence—the dreamer alone can expound dreams.

"A dream is from God" is one of the earliest, shortest and truest of sentences. Strange, stuttering, imperfect, but real and direct messengers from the Infinite, are our dreams. Like worn-out couriers, dying with their news at the threshold of the door, dreams seem sometimes unable to utter their tidings. Or is it rather that we do not yet understand their language, and must often thus lay missives aside which contain at once our duty and our destiny? The dreaming world—as the region where all elements are mingled, all contradictions reconciled, all tenses lost in one—supplies us with the only faint conception we have of that awful NOW in which the Eternal dwells. In every dream does not the soul, like a stream, sink transiently into the deep abyss whence it came, and where it is to merge at death? and are not the confusion and incoherence of dreams just the hubbub, the foam and the struggle with which the river weds the ocean?

But all dreams which ever waved rapture over the brow of youthful genius, dreaming of love or heaven, or which ever distilled poison on the drugged and desperate repose of unhappy bard or philosopher who has experienced the "pains of sleep," or cried aloud, as he awoke in struggles, "I shall sleep no more," must yield in magnitude, grandeur and comprehensiveness to the dreams which Daniel expounded or saw. They are all colossal in size, as befitted dreams dreamed in the palace of Babylon.

Let us look at the history of this great and almost faultless man. From out of the crowd of Jewish captives whom Nebuchadnezzar, after the conquest of Palestine, carried to Babylon, he caused a certain number of youths of highest rank, among whom was Daniel, who was of the royal line, to be selected, in

order that, after being educated in the palace, and instructed in all the learning of the times, they might be employed in services about his person. Being furnished, as was customary, with rich viands from the royal table, of which, however, they could not partake without violating the ceremonial law which God had imposed upon his people, Daniel applied for, and, not without some difficulty and hazard, obtained, permission for himself and his companions to use coarser food, and thenceforth voluntarily submitted to a course of life rigidly abstemious, that he might not disobey the commands of Heaven. Having early distinguished himself by his singular progress in learning, so that he speedily came to be ranked in the class of the wise or learned men of the country, and having recommended himself to those about him by the strict propriety of his conduct, he was soon furnished with an opportunity of displaying attainments of a higher order than any which human favor or skill can bestow. Nebuchadnezzar, having been visited with one of those visions of the night by means of which the omniscient God, in times previous to the gospel revelation, was wont to evince his providence and supreme administration, sought relief from the agitation into which the prophetic dream had plunged his proud spirit by demanding, with threats, from his wise men, not only an interpretation of the dream, but a relation of its circumstances, which, in the perturbed state of his mind, had escaped from his memory. In the denunciations of death which the infuriated monarch issued against those from whom he hoped to extort this superhuman information, Daniel with his companions was involved; and having obtained, by his prayers, from Him who alone could give it, a revelation of the mysterious vision, he was enabled to recall to Nebuchadnezzar's recollection the particulars of it, and to furnish the interpretation, accompanying his disclosures with a faithful and fearless exhortation to the monarch to acknowledge the supremacy of that God to whose inspiration alone Daniel ascribed his knowledge of the mystery.

On a subsequent occasion of a similar kind, Daniel, now advanced to high rank in the state, was called upon to declare to the same sovereign the decree of the Most High which had gone forth against him, that for his arrogant usurpation of the divine prerogative, and refusal to acknowledge the one living and true God, he should for a time be deprived of reason, and degraded from the height of his grandeur to the level of the brute creation. In this trying juncture he hesitated not to hazard his honors and his life, by faithfully disclosing the counsels of Heaven and recommending to the proud monarch humiliation and repentance: "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, that thou shalt be driven from the society of men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, till seven times shall pass over thee, and thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whom he will. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

A still more awful judgment of Heaven it fell to Daniel's lot to denounce against the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and last monarch of his line, when Babylon was now besieged by the victorious arms of the Persians and Medes; nor, in declaring to the dissolute Belshazzar the import of the handwriting upon the palace wall, did he swerve from that uprightness and fidelity to his God which had hitherto guided his conduct on similar emergencies. "Thou hast lifted up thyself," said this intrepid servant, "against the Lord of heaven, and the God in whose hand thy breath is hast thou not glorified. Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this is the interpretation of the thing: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

"In that night was Belshazzar slain; and Darius the Median,"

or, as he is otherwise called by profane writers, Cyaxares, "took the kingdom." This change of dynasty produced no alteration in Daniel's condition. The estimation in which he was held and the confidence reposed in him by the new sovereign appears, indeed, to have been unlimited. "It pleased Darius," says the sacred historian, "to set over the empire a hundred and twenty princes, and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was the first, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king designed to set him over the whole realm." This proposed exaltation of one who, though of royal extraction, and of acknowledged pre-eminence in respect of ability and worth, was still no more than a captive, aroused the jealousy of the other princes and nobles with whom he was associated in the government of the widely-extended provinces of this vast empire, and a general conspiracy was accordingly formed against him.

The eminent talents and endowments of Daniel, coupled with his unimpeachable probity, both in his capacity of a judge and of administrator of the public revenue, rendered the success of any charges proposed to be brought against him for incapacity or malversation in office altogether hopeless; "forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any *error* or *fault* to be found in him." Of this the band of conspirators were well aware. "Therefore," said they, "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except on the score of the law of his God." Against this point, therefore, they resolved to direct their efforts to destroy him. Daniel's devotion to his God was well known. At each of the three hours of prayer prescribed by the institution of his country he was wont daily to offer up supplication, with his face directed toward the holy temple of Jerusalem, as suggested in the solemn prayer of Solomon at the dedication of that sacred edifice.

Availing themselves of the ground offered by this pious practice of Daniel, and well assured that he would on no account desist from it, whatever personal consequences might ensue, the

conspirators applied to Darius to have it enacted that no man should, on pain of being cast into a den of lions, offer supplication to any god or man, for the space of thirty days, save unto the king—a proposition which was not more shockingly impious than many other gross flatteries offered in heathen times to princes of countries more enlightened than Assyria, and which might appear, perhaps, to Darius to be aimed against the Babylonish idolatries, which the Medes and Persians, whose faith and worship was less impure, viewed with contempt and detestation. Having procured the enactment of this ungodly and insidious decree, the enemies of Daniel failed not to find the ground of accusation which they sought; for to withhold, at the command of man, the honor which is due to God—to apostatize, even for a single day, from God's service, and virtually to acknowledge dependence on a fellow-mortal as the supreme and only object of supplication and arbiter of human destiny—was to Daniel's mind much more shocking than death, even in its most frightful forms. The charge being straightway preferred, and sentence, according to the letter of the decree, demanded, Darius' eyes were immediately opened to the malignant purposes of his princes; but the rigid character of the laws of the Medes and Persians, which appear, even at that period, to have been *proverbially* spoken of as unalterable, forbade the authoritative interposition of the monarch in behalf of the accused. Deeply grieved for the impending fate of one whose life was so valuable, and bitterly reproaching himself for his easy accession to a plot so infamous, Darius sought to find means of evading the consequences of his rash decree, and "labored," we are told, "till the going down of the sun, to deliver" his faithful servant. But the views he entertained of his duty as the guardian of his country's laws, and his apprehension of general evils which might ensue were enactments, formally completed, to be set aside, directly or indirectly, by the mere will of sovereigns, appear to have restrained him from adopting measures for effecting his just and merciful purpose, and with a

heavy heart he consigned the victim of treachery to the barbarous punishment which his decree appointed.

It was not, however, without a secret hope of his deliverance by a higher power that Darius saw his faithful servant cast into the lions' den; and after a sleepless night, he returned, full of anxiety, to the spot, and with a faltering voice called upon Daniel's name: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest able to deliver thee from the lions?" The answer verified the hopes which the king had cherished: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me: and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Thus did the Almighty show that in his hands alone are the issues of life and of death, and by this stupendous interposition did he sanction and establish for ever the truth of that principle which governed the life of his servant—that "God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" that in this life he can at his pleasure deliver them from dangers the most imminent, and if not in this life, in another, he certainly will redeem them from every evil and bestow all possible good. The impression made on the mind of the king by this signal act of divine interposition did not pass inactively away, but produced that memorable edict which was sent forth, addressed "to all people, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth": "I Darius issue my decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and steadfast for ever; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end."

During the remainder of Darius' brief administration, Daniel continued to be his chief and favorite counselor, and remained in the same situation of honor and trust for several years after Cyrus had assumed the undivided sovereignty of the empire. There is no doubt that he had a principal hand in procuring from that

monarch permission to the Jews to return to their native land; and having seen that great object of all his labors and all his desires on this side heaven accomplished, he died in peace in extreme old age, having numbered ninety years and upward.

There is, perhaps, in human character nothing so truly noble as that integrity which readily perils all present interests rather than comply with aught that opposes the will of the all-perfect Being to whom men owe life and all things. To gross depravity only, and that united with the most miserable blindness or imbecility of judgment, can such conduct become the subject of indifference or disrespect; while to right reason, no less than to true piety, it must ever be the object of unmingled admiration. To this distinguishing feature of the character before us was added another, which is uniformly found adjoined in all the greatest characters which have adorned our race—that of profound humility. In the fasting and humiliation of Daniel previous to the supplication he addressed to God for the restoration of his people, and in the deep contrition which, in his sublime and affecting prayer on that occasion, he expresses, for *his own sins* as well as those of his nation, the least imperfect and sinful of the sons of men may learn what lowly thoughts it becomes them to entertain of themselves.

The lot of Daniel doubtless contained much of the ordinary materials of human happiness, and it is not to be supposed that he was wholly insensible to its blessings. But the temporal honors and prosperity bestowed upon him were deeply mingled with those numberless anxieties, griefs and hazards which the exile who mourns his conquered country, and sighs for the home of his fathers, bears continually in his bosom, even amidst the insipid pageantry of greatness and the reverence reluctantly tendered him in a foreign land. It is not to be doubted, therefore, that, welcome as is the shadow of a great rock to the weary pilgrim of the desert, so to him whose hope was in heaven would be the message of Michael the archangel, when he summed up

the prophetic visions of Messiah's days, which, at the close of Daniel's long life, were vouchsafed him: "The words are sealed unto the time of the end;" "and go thou *and rest* until the end be. For thou *shalt rest*, and shalt stand in thy lot at the end of days."

In this life enjoyment is not the native condition of the soul, which only knows what joy is by experiencing the sensation at distant intervals, while the portions of life which intervene are comparatively insipid or embittered by troubles. But in heaven the soul shall "rest." There, not the occasional presence of transitory objects producing joy, but *joy itself*, is promised. The soul needs not then the presence of such objects. When once it shall have awakened from the dream of life, in the immediate presence of God, its unchangeable, its natural state, is joy. Among the varied sensations to be experienced in our present state, few, perhaps, are so delightful, or crowd into a single moment such exquisite feelings of joyful relief, as that which every one may have experienced when, just awakened from a troubled dream, he finds that the irremediable misery into which he imagined himself plunged, or the inexplicable guilt he had contracted, has vanished in a moment. So shall it be with all the apprehensions and sorrows which now he deems realities, when the faithful servant of God awakens, with similar sensations of delight, after passing the dark valley and shadow of death; they shall have vanished like the oppressive visions of the night. We may strive in vain, while this body is our home, to act and feel in conformity with the conviction of our reason, that the shapeless forms of affliction which assail us, and the fearful spectres of danger which stalk around us, are, and by him who is bound for eternity ought to be, accounted as less than nothing and vanity. But let us only, in imitation of the character before us, hold fast our integrity and our hope in God "until the end be," and we too shall "stand in our lot at the end of days," joyful in a sudden and entire redemption from all labors, fears and sorrows.

# XXXIV.

## ZECHARIAH.

THE mission of Zechariah was more especially to encourage his countrymen on their return from captivity, to restore Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. We select him, as one of our succession of Scripture characters, in order to possess an unbroken history of the Jewish people, and of their political, civil and religious condition at various periods. From the time of the captivity to the close of the Jewish nationality, a new phase in the prophetical writings becomes manifest—the prophets cease to denounce the idolatry of the Jews. Indeed, the captivity appears to have cured them of this enormous crime, as from that period, however prone they were to backsliding, still they set up no idolatrous worship in preference to the service of Jehovah. Other nations are still condemned and denounced, and so are the people of Israel, for their indifference; but now we have heart-searching appeals, blessed promises, a careful enunciation of religious privileges, constant reference to the coming of Messiah, and painful indications of the dispersion of the Israelites because of their rejection of the Saviour. The only exceptions that we can make among the Jews, from the above observations, were a few who fell into idolatry during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, spoken of in the Book of the Maccabees.

Zechariah was one of those who returned to Jerusalem at the close of the captivity. When he commenced his prophetical

labors, he appears to have been a young man. In the year B. C. 520 we find him, with the prophet Haggai, assisting Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest in animating the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the great work of rebuilding the temple. To this all his writings are directed. His book divides itself into two parts —the first containing the first eight chapters; and the second, the remaining six, which from their style and subjects seem to have been written near the end of his life, when his mind was more mature, and when the state of things in Jerusalem was greatly altered. How long Zechariah lived, or when he died, is not known. He is generally supposed to have ended his days at Jerusalem; and in the valley of Jehoshaphat there is still pointed out to travelers a tomb which is called "the tomb of Zechariah the prophet." So similar in style is he to Jeremiah that the Jews considered that the spirit of that prophet had passed into Zechariah; and so highly were his predictions esteemed that he was called "the sun among the lesser prophets." There is much vigor in the predictions of this prophet. His visions demand a careful perusal.

In the work of restoring the house of God the Samaritans interposed, desiring that they might be permitted to share in the undertaking. Being a mixed race, the descendants of the Israelites who remained in the northern kingdom after the captivity of the ten tribes, intermarrying with the Gentile colonists from Assyria, Zerubbabel and the other Jewish rulers negatived their request. This led to a long controversy, to inveterate hostility and to much bloodshed. The feelings of men are more intensely awakened by their religion than by anything else, and hence the heat of religious dissension. Never was this more fully shown than at this period in the history of the Jews. For a long time the Samaritans prevented the Jews from restoring the temple; and even when the latter were allowed to build, they were compelled to do so with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. Hence the hatred which existed for centuries between

the Jews and the Samaritans, kept alive by the latter raising a temple for themselves on Mount Gerizim. It was Darius, the son of Hystaspes, twenty years after the edict of Cyrus, who by decree allowed the Jews to erect their second temple. During the second year of the reign of this king, Zechariah delivered the first series of his predictions.

He reminds his countrymen of the sins of their fathers and of the sore displeasure of the Lord against them. He appeals to them to return from every wicked way, to serve the living God, and promises that he would return to them and abundantly bless them. He brings to their recollection the certainty of God's word as spoken by his prophets and his faithfulness in its fulfillment, and by a series of striking illustrations endeavors to arouse the Jews to diligence in the work of restoring both the city of Jerusalem and the house of God, and heartily to engage in his worship and service. The first vision is that of "a man riding upon a red horse, and behind him there were red horses, speckled, and white." "The red horse," in prophetical language, is the emblem of war; the man upon it is said to be "the angel of the Lord," by Jewish writers referred to the angel Michael, and by Lowth, Gill and others applied—and we think properly—to the Angel of the Covenant, the Son of Man, the Messiah. He is here represented as a man of war; and truly against the principalities and powers of darkness—against all wickedness—he wages a deadly conflict. Nor is he alone: others are with him, with horses of different colors—horses which indicate strength and swiftness to obey his will, however varied may be their work; whilst their being under the shade of the myrtle trees in the valley shows that they have been busily engaged in executing the divine purpose—are resting, but resting so as instantly to be ready to do the bidding of the Lord.

Age has its own advantages. It gives maturity to the judgment, ripeness to the experience, vividness and strength to faith, consolidation to the character, and nearness and power to eter-

nity and eternal realities. It clothes with a peculiar relish Christian hope, and encircles everything connected with Christ and his kingdom with the radiant atmosphere of a holy satisfaction. The very compositions of age differ from those of youth. There is a solidity about them which seems to say, "Life is retreating; we have much to do, and a limited season in which to accomplish it." They may lack many of the graces of earlier productions, and much of their fire, but they possess far more of the ringing metal of right thought and compact logic. Every word has weight, every sentence wisdom. Men learn, as they advance in years, that life is not sustained by flowers, but nourished by fruit, and that barley-meal is better than blossoms. Age tames the imagination and tones down the fancy, but gives insight to character, a knowledge of the world, and leads to perfect confidence alone in God.

It has been thought—and, we imagine, correctly—that the later prophecies of Zechariah are the productions of age. There is an elevation about them, a reference to the future, and a desire for the highest order of prosperity for his country, which betoken the spiritualizing influence of an approaching eternity. Circumstances, too, had altered in Jerusalem in the course of years. The temple had been finished, but the priesthood had become depraved. Events, also, of great interest were occurring in the history of other countries—their sins were being visited with punishment; and the prophet could not be silent about the state of his own people, and dared not be otherwise than faithful in warning and instructing them. To prepare his way, he begins by declaring "the burden of the Lord" on the land of Hadrach and Damascus, portions of Syria; on Hamath, Tyre and Sidon—especially against Tyre, with all her wealth and strength. And so terrible is this judgment to be that "Ashkelon is to see it, and fear; Gaza, and to be very sorrowful; and also Ekron;" and these cities of the Philistines are to be ruled by foreigners and peopled by strangers; but amidst all these convulsions Jerusalem

is to dwell safely and her temple to flourish. Nay; on the heels of this good news still better treads. A king is promised to Zion, "lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," who is to destroy the battle-bow in Israel, to speak peace to the heathen, and whose dominion is to reach from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Well may the prophet, in the name of the Lord, address the oppressed and say, "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day will I render double unto you." And congratulating Messiah, well may he add, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Zechariah, early after the captivity, feared for the people, because he discovered the ungodliness of the priests. He exhorts, therefore, in the tenth chapter, that they look to the Lord for their mercies, consult him alone, and disregard all other gods besides him. On the supposition of their doing so, victory is promised to the Jews over their enemies and, which was actually accorded to them in the days of the Maccabees, over the princes of the Grecian monarchy. But this, we think, was only a typical triumph, and the completion of this prophecy yet remains to be realized in the restoration of the Jews. Whether they are to return to their own land in these last days, or are only to be restored by being brought to a saving knowledge of the true Messiah, is a question which has been much disputed.

The eleventh chapter is a most solemn prophecy. It is full of threatening—foretells the ruin of the temple and city of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the dispersion of the Jews, by the rejection of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Even their distinguished men are to perish: "Howl, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen." The city is to become a heap and the temple a ruin; the towns and cities are to become desolate, and the fields to remain uncultivated. The people are to be scattered over the surface of the earth, for the greatness of their sin; even their Saviour is to be sold

to his murderers for thirty pieces of silver. How literally this prediction, with all connected with the dispersion of the Jews, has been fulfilled! Surely, God's ancient people are a living monument of the truth of his word. All he has said regarding them, as far as their history has been unfolded, he has fulfilled. This will be even more abundantly demonstrated in their ingathering than it has been in their rejection. The world will again be taught that there is a God in Israel.

The three remaining chapters of the book of Zechariah contain a series of predictions, and constitute one discourse. These prophecies are generally referred for their fulfillment to gospel times. The former part of the twelfth chapter announces the preservation of Jerusalem against a frightful invasion in the latest ages of the world, and appears to be identical with the conflict of Gog, of the land of Magog, against Israel, described in the thirty-eighth and the thirty-ninth chapters of the prophecies of Ezekiel. Spiritually, it contains a prophecy of the defence, protection and security of the Church of God from all its enemies. The latter part consists of an account of the repentance and sore grief of the Jews because their fathers had crucified the Saviour. The thirteenth chapter "opens a fountain in the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness;" and this, by setting at naught the malpredictions of the false prophets, by the coming of Christ, by the smiting of the Shepherd, by the gathering of a remnant, and the open acknowledgment by the Lord of his people by saying, "It is my people," and they by professing that "the Lord is their God." Again, in the fourteenth chapter, as in the twelfth, the overthrow of the enemies of Israel—the enemies of the Church of God—is predicted; the final conversion of the nations is announced; Jehovah is proclaimed king over the whole earth; "holiness to the Lord" becomes the banner-inscription of all lands; and the sacred vessels, yea, and the pots of Jerusalem and Judah, are to become holiness to the Lord; everything is to be sanctified by

religion, and men are to find an occasion of being religious in everything—

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

What a heaven on earth will be enjoyed then! So far now as Christianity has done its work, mind has been strengthened, society has been elevated, man has been made happy, nations have been blessed, and God has been glorified. Let the whole world be so influenced, men become righteous, and most assuredly we shall have a "new heavens and a new earth." The prophet of the restoration anticipates for our world this hallowed consummation.

# XXXV.

## EZRA.

IN the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Ezra set out for Jerusalem with a company in all of six or seven thousand souls. Eighty years had now elapsed since Zerubbabel and his company had returned to the holy city, so that he and most of those who accompanied him must now have been dead. Ezra was a descendant of the high priest Seraiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had put to death at the capture of Jerusalem. His chief object in returning was to re-establish fully and firmly the laws of Moses—a task for which his talents and training, as a ready scribe in the law, abundantly qualified him. He set out from Babylon, assembling his company at the river Ahava, a stream in Chaldea not now known. Four months were occupied in crossing the desert. Besides carrying with them a multitude of gold and silver vessels, Ezra and his friends had an order from the king authorizing the local treasurers of the imperial revenue to pay him what was necessary for his sacred mission.

On arriving at Jerusalem, he found, to his great distress, that his people had paid no regard to the law which prohibited their marriage with idolaters, and that the very princes had been foremost in forming those unhallowed connections. In the deepest humiliation of spirit, Ezra deplored their offence to the Lord, and, to his great relief, found soon after that the spirit of contrition had taken hold of the offenders. Measures were then

devised for separating them from their idolatrous wives and restoring the purity of the law of Moses.

Besides this important piece of reform, Ezra took a prominent part in another service, of the most valuable kind, with which his name will ever be honorably associated. This was the arranging, editing and publishing the Book of the Law, or canon of Scripture. It appears from various notices that up to this time copies of the law were very scarce among the Jews. Now that the people had returned from Babylon, they would not only be scarce, but to many the language in which the law was written would hardly be intelligible. Ezra's first care was to read the law publicly in the presence of the people, and as he read he explained the meaning in the ordinary dialect of the day. It has always been believed that Ezra was the person who, by divine inspiration, edited the books of the law, supplementing pieces of information that the original writers could not have supplied, perhaps compiling the Books of Chronicles, and arranging the order of the books in general, and of the Psalms in particular. Formerly the old Hebrew character had been used in writing; in place of this, Ezra substituted the better formed and finished letters of the Chaldee alphabet. The old character was preserved among the Samaritans, and is still to be seen in a very old copy of the Pentateuch, treasured by a small remnant of that people now residing at Nablous or Shechem.

Some of the changes thus introduced by Ezra were of the utmost practical importance. The full acquaintance with the word of God which the Jewish people were now enabled to acquire must have tended greatly to discourage idolatry, and promote that devotedness to the letter at least of the law for which they now became so eminent. Out of the arrangements which Ezra began, two things arose that had ultimately a very great influence, partly for good and partly for evil. One of these was the institution of synagogues and synagogue-worship; the other, the system of traditions. It does not appear that before the cap-

tivity the Jews had synagogues; but after the captivity they were set up in every direction, for the reading of the law, exhortation and prayer. The reading and expounding of the law now became a regular profession, and it was not confined to the priests, or even to the tribe of Levi. By the "lawyers" (as the members of that profession were called) the written word was expounded and supplemented wherever it appeared obscure or defective. Gradually the notion gained ground that besides the written law there was an oral law, which God had communicated to the fathers, but not recorded, the knowledge of which could be obtained and preserved only by tradition. This constituted the "tradition of the elders," in connection with which our Lord often showed so great and so just indignation. In the middle of the second century after Christ, Rabbi Judah, the son of Simeon, a celebrated doctor, collected these traditions, and committed them to writing. The book in which they were collected was called the Mishna. Commentaries on the Mishna have been written by learned rabbis, the commentary alone being called the Gemara, and the commentary and Mishna together the Talmud. The Babylonish Talmud, or the Talmud compiled by the Chaldean Jews, is a work in twelve folio volumes. Out of this vast mass of tradition the real spirit of the law and the prophets has been almost entirely eliminated.

# XXXVI.

## NEHEMIAH.

TO understand the character and appreciate the history of this great Jewish patriot and religious reformer, it is necessary that we turn our eyes to Jerusalem and acquaint ourselves with the state of the Jewish people and nation at the moment when he comes upon the scene.

The second temple has been reared by the hands of Zerubbabel in the midst of frowning difficulties and in the face of many foes, and its long-interrupted solemn rites restored. Large portions of the city have also been rebuilt, the eloquence of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, as well as the pious zeal of Ezra, seconding the efforts of the governors and helping to quicken the energies of the dispirited community.

But the prosperity of the city is checked, the seemly order of its temple-worship disturbed, and the people kept in constant anxiety and alarm by the fact that its walls are still in ruins and its gates burnt with fire. They are thus exposed to the assaults of the jealous and hostile tribes by whom they are surrounded, their energies exhausted and their very existence threatened.

And yet the preservation of this beleaguered and feeble people is an event of highest importance to the whole human race. In them the Church of God is to be continued on the earth, and the permanent religious education of the world secured. For ages to come they are to be the consecrated guardians of the know-

ledge and worship of the true God, who are to hold high the lamp of heavenly truth, and preserve it from extinction until He who is "the desire of all nations" shall come and send its blessed light all over the earth. They are to be "an illuminated clock placed by the hand of God himself in the dark steeple of time."

In these circumstances, where shall we look for the man who is to rebuild the walls of the sacred city, and thus to protect its worship, to inspire with hope and bind in unity its disjointed multitudes, and to introduce those elements of strength which shall ultimately turn the feeble colony into an independent nation?

To find the answer to this question, we must pass in thought to the dominions of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, who continues to hold the Jews who have migrated to their own land in subjection as a tributary colony. From various causes many of the chosen people still linger in the land of their exile, and among these there is one who stands high in the confidence and at the court of this great monarch of the East, and whom God has evidently "raised up for such a time as this," and this is Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer.

Who could have expected to find, in this place above all others, the man who, in a double sense, was to "build up the waste places of Zion"? But the history of the Church abounds in instances in which all its future appears for a time to hang on the brittle thread of a single human life, and in which God has his hidden instruments waiting for acting effectively, and for stepping forth at the fittest juncture and "turning the shadow of death into the morning."

## THE CUPBEARER.

I. And here we must be on our guard against allowing ourselves to be misled by the mere sound of the designation that is given to Nehemiah. In the literal form of his office as cupbearer his duty was to wait on the king's person, and to pour out the wine before him and present it to him in a graceful

manner, having previously dipped a smaller cup into the larger one that was presented to his royal master, and tasted the wine as an assurance that it was not poisoned. But it is not difficult to understand how this office, bringing the individual who bore it into frequent and confiding intercourse with the king, should gradually have become one of highest emolument, influence and trust. The king's cupbearer, in fact, grew into the king's counselor; it became his duty to decide who should be admitted into the king's presence and who should be rejected, and to introduce and commend those whom he approved.

To this position of highest honor and confidence his high abilities and tried fidelity had gradually raised this descendant of Hebrew exiles in the court of the greatest potentate of the East. We must conceive of him as now discharging his office at Shushan, the winter palace of the Persian king, of whose magnificence and splendor ancient historians have written with an enthusiasm which it is difficult to believe has not betrayed them into exaggeration and fable. But even the sober and truthful pages of the Book of Esther bring up before our imagination a gorgeous and dazzling picture of the palace of Shushan, with its curtains of fine linen and purple suspended on rings of silver and pillars of marble; its couches of ivory, silver and gold standing on pavements of the most costly stones; its sparkling fountains cooling the air; its flowers spreading fragrance; its trees dropping fruit and offering grateful shade,—everything, in fact, to regale the senses and to soothe the spirit. In the midst of all this splendor and luxury, and surrounded by a crowd of attendants and ministers of state, moved Nehemiah, "as to the manner born," the counselor and confidant of their king.

## PIETY OF NEHEMIAH.

II. I confess that, next to my devout wondering at the providence of God which had raised Nehemiah to this elevation for future service to his Church, that which most of all impresses my

mind is the fact that he had maintained his attachment to his people and his religion in the midst of all these unfavorable influences. Knowing the power of outward circumstances to mould the character, especially when these circumstances fall in with our natural tastes, we should have feared that this Hebrew, after resisting the strong current of custom and general feeling for a time, would by degrees have yielded to its power, and that, with every luxury at his command, he would at length have owned the spell of the enchantment and became conformed in character to those around him.

Moreover, as men in circumstances of comfort and ease are naturally unwilling to be disturbed by thoughts of suffering and complaints of sorrow, we can imagine him to have shut out from his mind all grating recollections of distant Jerusalem and her depressed and struggling colonists. Everything in that luxurious court and palace seemed formed to exclude all thoughts of suffering and sadness; why should he, by busy remembrances and vagrant fancies, dissolve the pleasing spell and lead the gloomy spectre in? Let him forget what he is unable to prevent, assimilate to the charmed circle in which he moves, and drink with zest the cup of pleasure which every day is held up so invitingly to his lips.

But it is not thus that Nehemiah thinks and feels. In the midst of all these influences, before which everything but a living piety would have perished, his eye remains single, his heart pure and his faith unshaken. He sees through all the enchantment that is around him, knows what it is all really worth, and does his duty in the midst of it all without being dazzled by it. Moving amid those marble pillars and incense-laden groves, among courtiers and scheming flatterers, the heart of this true Hebrew is often far away at Jerusalem and its temple, and with the oppressed remnant that have begun to build and inhabit the homes of their fathers; and in his prayers he secretly pledges again and again his imperishable love to the chosen people and

the holy city: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

There was no doubt much of true patriotism in all this, but there was more still of true piety. The love of a devout Jew for Jerusalem was not the mere common love of fatherland, but of all that Jerusalem represented and enshrined—love for the true religion and for pure worship, for the Church and people of God.

It is, then, a possible thing to keep alive our piety when duty has placed us in the midst of influences that are unfavorable to its growth, and even unfriendly to its existence; for this Jew could keep the sacred flame burning amid the ungenial atmosphere of a heathen court.

That we have not overstated the devout love of Nehemiah for Jerusalem is evident from the eager inquiries with which he questioned his brother Hanani and other men of Judah who at length arrived, weary and travel-stained, at Shushan, from the distant holy city. It is likely that even their countenances revealed in part the sorrowful nature of the message which they brought; but when they entered into the detailed description of Jerusalem's misery and reproach, and proceeded to tell him of the defenceless city, with its still ruined walls and burnt-up gates, and the consequent affliction of its people, daily embittered by the taunts of their idolatrous assailants—"Where is now your God?"—the soul of the magnanimous Hebrew was now for a time completely overwhelmed by the evil tidings which so far exceeded even his worst fears. In the greatness of his sorrow, his natural food became distasteful and unwelcome to him; "he wept and mourned certain days, and fasted." But when these first strong outbursts of his grief were past, he turned for relief to that quarter to which every pious heart will be sure to turn in its affliction—to the power, compassion and faithfulness of

his covenant God. "I prayed," says he, "before the God of heaven."

PRAYER FOR DIRECTION.

III. It is especially worthy of notice that, in his "fervent, inwrought prayer," Nehemiah brings before his mind those aspects of the divine character and relations which are particularly fitted to sustain and encourage him in his supplications. He does not present mere random ascriptions, but the first adoring sentence covers, as it were, and vindicates, every subsequent plea. What an appropriateness there is, for example, in the first name by which he addresses Jehovah as "the God of heaven"! Those Persian idolaters presented much of their worship to the heavenly bodies—the sun, moon and stars, or to emblems that represented these; but looking up into the starry firmament from some recess in the gardens of Shushan whither he had retired to pray, he could claim and worship that God who had framed all these bright luminaries, and who kept them in order, as his God.

Let it not be supposed that the next designation of Jehovah as "the great and terrible God" is the least in opposition to those sentiments of filial trust which we have ascribed to Nehemiah. If there is a glance in this language at the judgments which God had executed on the Jewish nation because of their apostasy and idolatry, I conceive that it is yet more intended to express the thought that, notwithstanding the present weakness and depression of the Jewish nation, God was able both to restrain and to punish the wickedness and cruelty of those who continued to oppress them, and to cause their very "wrath to praise him." Accordingly, he immediately proceeds to speak of him further as "the God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and keep his commandments." The whole affords an instructive and beautiful illustration of the manner in which a believer under the Christian dispensation, having "acquainted himself with God," and found peace in the discoveries and

promises of the gospel, may expatiate in thought upon the boundless universe, and gather from all the manifestations of divine power and wisdom which he can read there ground for confidence and matter for prayer.

Confession of sin fitly follows adoration, and Nehemiah reads the divine condemnation of the obdurate rebellion and apostasy of his people in those burnt gates and ruined walls: "I confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee." But the personal character of this confession is perhaps its most interesting part, because it is the strongest proof that it is real. There is a way of acknowledging sin so vague and general as rather to deaden than to quicken the sense of it. The individual loses himself in the multitude. The secret thought of his heart is, "What are my personal sins to those of my nation but as a drop in the ocean?" and thus what outwardly takes the shape of an acknowledgment is spoken to his heart as an apology.

But it is not thus that the truly broken and contrite spirit thinks and feels. As in the instance of Nehemiah, the individual's own transgressions and those of his kindred confront him the most largely and darkly of all: "Both I and my father's house have sinned." For just as in external nature there is the law of perspective, which makes the objects that are nearest appear the largest, so, it has been remarked, there is in the spiritual world a moral perspective, which causes every man who feels aright to know the wickedness of his own heart the best and to mourn over it the most.

And now taking fast hold of the divine faithfulness and covenant, this ardent worshiper lays down at the footstool of heavenly mercy his great petition that God would maintain the cause of his now penitent people, consolidate their national strength and restore their waste places. I admire the holy ingenuity with which the petition is urged. God had been faithful to his threatenings when his people had revolted against him, and had scattered them abroad among the nations, and Nehemiah finds a

foothold for his faith even among their ruins and desolations, making him bold to plead that he would now show himself equally faithful to his promises. His people had now turned to him and kept his commandments; and had he not said that if they did so, "even though they were cast out into the uttermost part of the heaven, he would gather them from thence" and cause the light of his countenance anew to shine upon them? This promise had been spoken and recorded more than a thousand years before, but it had not become effete or obsolete. The ink in which the holy and immutable God writes his engagements never becomes dim or fades.

The manner in which Nehemiah now takes his solid footing upon this word of God reminds us of Augustine's description of the prayers of his mother Monica for his conversion while he was still her profligate son. She particularly pleaded the promises of God in reference to the seed of believers, laid her finger as it were upon his very words—"showed him his own handwriting;" and all the Church knows how her noble importunity and mighty faith prevailed. It was in the same spirit that Nehemiah now knelt before the divine mercy-seat, while, with his mouth filled with holy arguments, he urged the further thought of the dishonor that would be cast by the heathen upon the divine name were his servants and people, when they had now returned to him, to have "their house left unto them desolate."

This prayer had often been presented in substance by Nehemiah; he had "prayed it before the Lord day and night." And it would seem that while thus offering it up from time to time, the thought had gradually formed itself into a solemn and deliberate purpose that if he should obtain the consent of his royal master, and promise of the necessary equipments and resources, he himself would undertake the arduous but welcome enterprise of rebuilding the ruined walls and reviving and consolidating the national strength. This accounts for the request with which the prayer is closed—that "God would grant him mercy in the

sight of this man;" in other words, that he would incline the heart of Artaxerxes to favor his suit when at some seasonable moment he preferred his petition for authority and assistance.

But how much meaning there is in this language of Nehemiah! It shows us how the sense of the divine presence and majesty, when it comes powerfully upon our spirit, tends to reduce the greatest of human beings to their proper level in our estimate—"*this man.*" It is worthy of remark, however, that Nehemiah found it far more easy to make his request to the heavenly than to the earthly king—to the God of heaven than to Artaxerxes. Four months elapsed from the time of his first hearing of the great affliction and reproach of Jerusalem; winter had passed into the beautiful Persian spring before the favorable occasion offered itself of making his request that he might go to its relief; and when the opportunity did at length present itself, it came unexpectedly.

SUCCESS.

IV. I think it likely that, in his attendance on his royal master during the intervening months, there had been a constant effort to conceal the sorrow about Jerusalem that was so strongly at work in his breast, and that while he had many a time retired to weep and pray, he had done his utmost to maintain his wonted looks of cheerfulness when he stood before the king.

The regulations of those Eastern courts forbade all sounds of grief or looks of sorrow within them. All was to be gay in those halls of splendor and haunts of luxury; the miseries that were without were to cast no dark shadow there. It was a vain battling against the stern logic of facts, a futile attempt of human power thus to practice a sort of deception upon itself. There was one dark spectre—death—who would enter when he chose, uncalled and unwelcomed, and whom no porter or armed guards could keep out; and that train of diseases which were commonly death's harbingers and messengers would wait no human bidding and respect no royal interdict.

At length, however, the sorrow of this noble-minded Hebrew will not conceal. His many vigils of weeping and prayer, his "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick," tell upon his countenance, and reveal to the keen eye of the monarch accustomed to read countenances and to penetrate disguises the existence of a sorrow that is yet unspoken. Eager to know the secret mental cause that has thrown this deep shadow over his servant, he suddenly inquires, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else than sorrow of heart."

The question fills him with a new anxiety. Might not Artaxerxes be angry when he became aware that, while living in the sunshine of his favor, his thoughts had been far away with an afflicted people, and amid the desolations of the city and of his fathers? and might he not, with the proverbial caprice of men armed with absolute and arbitrary power, send back into deepest disgrace the man whom he had so often taken as his counselor? How much depended on his striking the right chord in the monarch's mind, and on his doing this neither too violently nor too gently! The fate of his beloved Jerusalem and of everything precious in its future seems now to tremble in the balance. We do not wonder, therefore, when he tells us, "Then I was sore afraid."

But thus far the pious patriot speeds in his interview. His reference to "the city, the place of his fathers' sepulchres lying waste, and the gates thereof consumed with fire," awakens chords of human sympathy in the monarch's bosom, without arousing his idolatrous prejudices, and draws forth from him the question which brings this momentous interview to a crisis: "For what dost thou make thy request?" But before he answers Artaxerxes there is another King to whom he makes his request. "So I prayed," says he, "to the God of heaven."

This is one of the most striking instances recorded in the Bible of what is commonly termed ejaculatory prayer—an example of the way in which good men, in the intercourse and business of

daily life, especially when brought into circumstances of unexpected difficulty, even when there is no motion of the lips, scarcely more, indeed, than an "upward glancing of the eye," may yet send up such a quick and compacted supplication to God as shall bring down all heaven to their aid. It is not meant that such ejaculations are to be a substitute for those more lengthened seasons of supplication of which we have just seen so interesting an example on the part of Nehemiah, but that they may be profitably used by us when the other is for the time impossible.

"When we are time-bound," says good Thomas Fuller in his *Good Thoughts*, "place-bound or person-bound, so that we cannot compose ourselves to make a large solemn prayer, this is the right instant for ejaculations, whether orally uttered or only poured forth inwardly in the heart. Ejaculations take not up any room in the soul. They give liberty of callings, so that at the same time one may follow his proper vocation." Oh what a blessed resource to the Christian merchant amid the fretting annoyances and the thousand perplexities of business! And what a benefit to all thus to fill up the intervals between their more prolonged devotions by brief ejaculatory prayers which go to make the whole life devout!

> "These form the links of an electric chain
> That join the orisons of morn and eve,
> And propagate through all its several parts,
> While kept continuous, the ethereal fire."

What a moral distance at this moment separated between these two men—the King and his cupbearer! Nehemiah, in that brief prayer, has passed into another world, of which his royal master knows nothing, and has enlisted on his side a power which can "turn the heart of kings as a man turneth the courses of waters." No doubt the purport of his petition was that he might be guided in the use of right words, and that God would prosper his request. Then, delivered by confidence in God from

all unworthy fear of man, he calmly spreads before the king his petition that he might be released for a season from his office in his court, and commissioned to build up the waste places of Jerusalem and to make it once more a strong and defenced city. A great future was involved in that request. "And the king granted me," says Nehemiah, "according to the good hand of my God upon me."

It is particularly important, however, that we should notice here that, while Nehemiah was thus a man of prayer and of devout dependence upon God, he neglected no arrangement for prospering his enterprise which forethought or prudence could suggest. Thus he obtained a military escort to surround his mission at once with dignity and safety. He asked for royal letters to the governors of the various provinces beyond the river Euphrates, through which he must pass on his way to Judah, by which his undertaking might be accredited, suspicion dispelled, and an addition to his convoy obtained when danger or other circumstances might render it expedient. In order that there might be no questioning of his authority or impeding of his work after he had reached Jerusalem, he asks for a special letter to Asaph, the keeper of the royal forest on the mountains of Lebanon, requiring him to send him as much timber as might be necessary for the various departments of his enterprise, while he also states in detail before the king what those various departments are.

How much there was in all this at once of wise forethought which would not throw over upon Providence difficulties which might be prevented by prudence, and of that clear and honorable explanation which is one great security against future misunderstanding and complaint! The man of prayer is also a man of business. Nehemiah wishes to take nothing vaguely for granted; he will know from the first the full extent of his authority and the measure of his resources; and having learned these, he will honorably keep within the pale of his commission. How much

of subsequent dispute and mutual recrimination have often lurked within the folds of an ill-made and vaguely-expressed bargain!

The whole narrative constrains us to remark on the power of prayer in influencing the history of the Church and the world. It is impossible not to feel, after the study of such a passage as this, that if human history were to be truly written—written as we may conceive an angel to write it—much less influence would be ascribed to the policy of kings and the diplomacy of statesmen, and more to the prayers of holy men. Common history deals mainly with material forces; inspired history lifts the veil and shows us those more subtle and spiritual forces in operation which do so much to shape the destiny alike of individuals and of communities. As this one Hebrew, for example, retired to some quiet chamber in the palace of Shushan, or to the deep shade of some tree in the gardens around the palace, to "pray his prayer day and night," what an influence was he thereby putting forth upon the counsels of Artaxerxes, upon the distant Jerusalem and upon the future history of the kingdom of God, touching the first link in the chain on which all others depended, moving the hand that was moving the universe!

## THE PRELIMINARY MEASURES TO THE BUILDING OF THE WALL.

V. One of the most important of these was a deliberate survey of its ruined state and a calm estimate of the work to be effected. This was an obviously wise step before entering on so great an undertaking, in order that the difficulties might neither be injuriously magnified nor unduly slighted. In the case of Nehemiah, too, as of most men, there was an advantage in the heart being reached through the eye, and in the resolution being strung afresh through actual and impressive contact with the evil.

And there is something at once pathetic and picturesque in the description which the narrative itself gives us of this Jewish patriot, mounted on his mule and moving by moonlight among

the ruined walls and broken gates of the city of his fathers. What histories!—what memories of faded glories!—what contrite reflections on their moral causes!—must have risen up in his brave but saddened heart as his shadow fell upon one part of the ruins after another! Those who had lived long in Jerusalem were apt to have become accustomed and in some degree reconciled to things as they were, and in consequence apathetic and indifferent. This Jew from Shushan, looking upon the whole with a fresh eye, and having his mind filled with glowing pictures of Israel's glorious past, would better measure and appreciate the proportions of the misery.

And were one now coming, I shall not say from a distant country, but from a far-off world—an apostle from heaven—and taking a survey of the existing state of the spiritual Jerusalem, the Church of God, what would be his feelings and impressions? We are accustomed, and therefore too much reconciled, to existing evils; but how would they look to his fresh and divinely-illuminated eye? Would he not, in many parts of his survey, be like one gazing upon ruined walls and gates burnt with fire?

The remaining part of the night would doubtless be given by Nehemiah to many thoughts and prayers; the morrow, when it comes, must be devoted to stirring into action and binding in one his dispirited and divided fellow-countrymen. Though he bore with him the royal authority and commission requiring the people of Jerusalem to co-operate with him in his work, he was too brave a man to proceed upon mere authority, and too wise a man not to see that men wrought better from love than from fear, and that the union of hearts as well as hands in such an enterprise as that to which he had now consecrated himself was essential to success. And the arguments which he used with the chiefs and people when, on the next day, he summoned them together, were admirably fitted to stir into life their dormant energies, and to unite their hitherto disjointed ranks in one.

He appealed to their distressed condition as seen in their walls

and gates still in ruins, and bitterly felt, in the injuries and taunts not only against their nation but against their religion, to which these desolations daily exposed them from their heathen neighbors. He told them how, hearing in the far-distant palace of Shushan of their great affliction, he had been overwhelmed with grief at their depression and dishonor—how the purpose had gradually formed itself in his mind of coming to wipe away their reproach—how he had, many a day and night, asked "the God of heaven" to assist him by inclining the heart of the Persian monarch to grant him the necessary authority and help for the building of their wall—and how the king had granted him his request in such a manner as to make it evident that "the whole thing was of the Lord." And now appearing in the midst of them with the combined authority of earth and heaven, he asked them whether they were prepared to take advantage of "the set time to favor Zion," and arise with him and build the wall.

This appeal at once to their patriotism and to their piety, to their shame, to their fears and hopes—this manifestation before them of a visible providence working in their behalf—made them as one man, and drew from them the loud and unanimous response, "Let us rise up and build."

There are men of great souls and strong faith whose presence in a community is like that of a war-trumpet on the eve of battle, bracing all with stern and eager purpose. And such was Nehemiah now among the people of Jerusalem. His holy energy and high hope became contagious; the people rose for the time to the moral level of their leader; each was a sort of Nehemiah in his own sphere, and each helped to make stronger the hand and heart of his neighbor. And so the same day which had beheld them in the morning dispirited and disjointed—rulers, priests and people—found them, before the evening, hopeful and united, eager to have the foundation laid of that structure which should make their Jerusalem once more a defenced city and "a praise

in the whole earth." "So they strengthened their hands for this good work."

## THE PERSONS PARTICULARLY EMPLOYED IN THE BUILDING OF THE WALL.

VI. It is pleasing to remark that among the first to catch the spirit of this great "restorer of the waste places of Jerusalem" were the priests and ministers of religion. We may imagine them to have often wept and mourned, like Nehemiah in the distant Shushan, over the desolations of their sacred city, and to have sent up to heaven many an earnest supplication for the time when, like their fathers, they should walk about Zion, and go round about her, consider her palaces, and mark well her bulwarks, that they might tell it to the generation following. The consequence was that when this devout patriot appeared suddenly in the midst of them, with his trumpet-call summoning them to this great work, there was no class of the community whose reception of him was more cordial.

It has not generally been observed that they were the first to finish the building of their allotted portion of the wall, and that they "sanctified it"—that is, solemnly dedicated their work, when finished, to the divine honor, and acknowledged the dependence of the builders on God for the success of all that was to follow, their conduct reminding us of that beautiful act of laying upon the altar of God in the temple the first ripe sheaf of corn at the beginning of harvest, as an acknowledgment that "the earth was the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

This promptitude and precedence of the ministers of religion in the undertaking was greatly to be desired, not only on their own account, but for the work's sake. From the place of influence which they occupied, they had much in their power either to hinder or to advance Nehemiah's enterprise. And the proper place for ministers of religion in every work of holy zeal is in the vanguard of the movement, in the foremost ranks of the

armies of the living God. If they move slowly, others will not move at all. But "their zeal will provoke very many." A thousand torches will be kindled at their lamp. The holy anointing "oil upon the head of Aaron will descend upon his beard, and even to the skirts of his garments."

The nobles and rulers also appear to have thrown themselves with becoming ardor into the movement; though it is among them that we meet with an exception in the instance of the Tekoan nobles, who "put not their necks to the work of the Lord," but stood aloof from an enterprise which was making the nation's heart young again, and in which their elevated rank and privileged position should have given them all the deeper an interest. It is surely not to be overlooked that, in the chapter which records the names and exploits of the builders, a brand is placed over those Tekoan chiefs, and that they are thus hung in chains and held up to perpetual shame and infamy. But it is seasonable, at the same time, to remember that there is another book of God in which all our acts are in process of being recorded—a book in which there are no omissions or errors, and from which there shall be no erasures—the book which shall be opened at the last day, and out of which we shall be judged—in which neglected opportunities of "coming forth to the help of the Lord" shall be found impartially reported, and the cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall be placed in everlasting remembrance.

But then, as if to balance this proud and selfish indifference on the part of the Tekoan nobles, we find the mass of the community animated by one heart and soul of patriotism and cheerful activity—particular classes of them, such as the goldsmiths, the apothecaries and the merchants forming themselves into companies and building such large portions of the wall as extended between two gates; the representatives from neighboring towns and villages and rural districts willingly offering themselves for other parts of the work; even the solitary lodger in his chamber

building that part of the wall which was over against his own dwelling; and the high-souled daughters of certain of the rulers throwing off for a time the retiring spirit and the domestic habits of their sex, and, in some form of personal effort, helping to surround with a wall of defence the city of their fathers and the temple of their God.

It was a grand and animating spectacle to behold these three miles of wall crowded with busy companies of ungrudging laborers, and a joyous sound to hear the noise of hammer and mallet and the hum of industry all round the wide circuit from the earliest dawn of day until "the stars of heaven appeared." It was, in fact, a revival season, in which something of the best days of David and Solomon had returned upon the people.

We do not read that Nehemiah himself was engaged in the actual work of rebuilding any part of the wall, but he took the general oversight and guidance of the whole; and as Mr. Henry has said, "we do not expect the pilot to hale at a rope; it is enough for him to steer." He was the presiding genius and animating soul of the enterprise, to whom all looked, like a tried general on some great battle-field, in whose single arm there appeared to sleep the secret of victory.

We may imagine him now standing on some elevated part of Mount Zion, overlooking the whole busy scene, and sending messages to the leaders and their companies on different portions of the wall; now walking his rounds among the builders, smiling on the earnest, prompting the laggard, and having some "word fitly spoken" for all; and again watching the movements of the enemy, who at one time hovered like a cloud in the distance, and again drew nearer to the work. And while every eye upon the wall turns often to Nehemiah, his eye is turned oftener yet to another Onlooker from the skies, even to Him who has put it into his heart to build; and as he realizes his power and promise, he rises above all faint-heartedness and fear, and exclaims anew, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us."

The application of these facts to the promotion and extension of the true religion is obvious and interesting. The walls of the Christian Church are now in process of erection, and have been so for thousands of years. Portions of these walls are beginning to appear above the surface of the earth in many lands, and every converted man has some particular work to do in helping forward the sacred enterprise to completion and triumph.

The picture of the solitary lodger building over against his own chamber may be regarded as giving sanction and encouragement to individual effort. The particular companies, under qualified leaders, undertaking the erection of larger portions of the wall, may be held as representing properly-organized congregations and well-equipped missionary societies in their systematic endeavors to advance the vital interests of the kingdom of God at home and to establish and extend Christian missions in foreign countries. While the fact that merchants and artisans had their allotted sphere in the building of the wall may surely be employed to suggest that they too, as well as the ministers of religion, have their own work to do in repairing the waste places of the spiritual Jerusalem. It was the liberality of a Christian merchant which helped Tyndale to translate the Bible into the English tongue, when he was refused protection and hospitality in the house of a bishop who would not "set his neck to the work of the Lord;" and the holy zeal and courage of other merchants brought copies of his Bible in thousands into the seaports of England after it had been translated. No one, in fact, has warrant to be idle, but in some form or other must put forth his hand and build.

It was no holiday work, however, to which Nehemiah and his compatriots had consecrated themselves. It could not be said of the wall, as in Heber's beautiful line respecting the temple of Solomon, that it grew in a sort of serene silence—

"Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung;"

but, from the laying of the foundation to the putting on of the

copestone, it was met by opposition and difficulty, and grew "in troublous times."

## THE OPPOSITION WHICH THE BUILDING OF THE WALL ENCOUNTERED.

VII. This opposition came principally from the mixed and idolatrous tribes by whom Jerusalem was at this time surrounded, the names of whose leaders have been given to perpetual infamy in Nehemiah's own narrative — Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian. One of the principal forms in which their enmity showed itself was the casting of ridicule upon the enterprise and the builders, slighting the attempt as impracticable with such means and in the face of such resistance as they would be sure to meet, and doing what they could to spread discouragement and consequent division among the workers by prophesying the failure which they desired. "What do these feeble Jews?" exclaimed Sanballat, contemptuously; "will they fortify themselves? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" while Tobiah the Ammonite tried to better the evil prophecies of his ally by something more contemptuous and sarcastic still: "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

In all this we have an example of the terms of incredulity and scorn in which men without religion often speak of Christian efforts for the highest good of the world. "It is only a fit of momentary enthusiasm," they will tell us; or if perseverance contradicts this, then we are assured that the work is impracticable, and that a few feeble worms might as soon attempt to level the Alps into a plain. In this way they are ever measuring spiritual forces by a mere material standard which cannot be applied to them, and constantly finding their "glory turned into shame."

Other forms of opposition and discouragement, having their

parallel also in the history and experience of the Christian Church, beset the movements of Nehemiah and his builders, the greater number of them being organized or prompted by those sleepless adversaries from without. Now they were threatened with sudden and simultaneous assault; again, the enemy made secret efforts to find an entrance into the city and to stop the work of the Lord. To-day, conspiracies were formed on various pretences to draw Nehemiah into their toils, some false-hearted men among the Jews themselves helping the treacherous attempt; to-morrow, the report was spread that in all this Nehemiah was plotting rebellion against Artaxerxes, and that he intended to make himself their king; a third day, some faint-hearted men of Judah came to him and sought to palsy him and his people with their craven fears.

Notwithstanding, in the midst of all these discouragements and obstructions, the brave soul of this heroic man never quailed; the wall rose like a thing of life, every new day marking progress, and in less than two months the holy city was girded round with its defences; its ten massive gates were set up, and men could walk on its summits, and looking forth on their disappointed and astonished adversaries, could see how the dismay and reproach with which they had sought to confound and cover them had returned into their own bosoms.

## THE SPIRIT AND THE MEANS BY WHICH THE BUILDING OF THE WALL WAS CARRIED ON.

VIII. 1. One interesting feature in the operations of these builders was subdivision of labor combined with harmony of aim. Each organized company of workers had its own place on the wall assigned to it, and each person in that company had his own allotted part of the work to do, and did it. In like manner, the solitary laborer fell in with the general arrangements and concentrated his energies on the part of the wall that was given him to build. By this means it was secured that there should

be no superfluity of labor in one place, and no proportionate lack in another; that there should be no jostling or crossing of each other's path on the part of the workers; and that the full strength of the great host of builders should be elicited to the utmost without any waste of power.

But while each individual and company thus kept to their allotted sphere and place on the wall, the interest of each extended over the entire structure. Each rejoiced in the success of his neighbor, and felt that he was co-operating with all for one great and common end.

It should be thus with Christians and Christian churches in spreading the gospel over the world. There should everywhere be a friendly recognition of each other's services and success. If one has already begun to build on one part of the wall, we should pass him with a kindly greeting and benediction, and go and work where as yet there is no builder. "If thou wilt go to the right hand, then I will go to the left." While, with a good will, that embraces in it all honest workers for Christ, our prayers should extend over the whole circuit of Christian missions all round the globe, and find frequent utterance to the cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen."

2. Nor should the remarkable circumstance be overlooked, because of the important lesson which it suggests, that wherever a man's house stood in proximity to the wall, he began by building that portion of the wall which stood over against his own house. For how naturally does the observation grow out of this fact, that personal religion and family piety ought to precede and accompany all other and more extensive efforts for building up the cause of Christ in the world, and that the man who is setting a holy and consistent Christian example in his own social sphere, and the parent who is sending forth morally-trained and Christianly-educated children upon the world is doing not a little for building up the walls of Jerusalem!

3. The whole mass of the people seem to have given themselves with undivided will to this work of pious patriotism. With some insignificant exceptions, the heart of the entire city, in every rank and age of its population, was stirred to its very centre, and moved to rise up and build. The idlers, and grumblers, and prophets of evil days, and procrastinators who said, "This is not the time to build," were transmuted, if not by principle, yet by the power of a common sympathy, into better men. The whole strength of Jerusalem, mental, moral and physical, was concentrated on that wall, for "the people had a mind to work."

4. But nothing was more remarkable in Nehemiah and his builders, or more contributed to the success of their enterprise, than their spirit of prayerful perseverance and unwavering confidence in God. We saw the first sublime purpose of building the wall formed with prayer in the heart of Nehemiah while he was still in the distant Shushan; multitudes of the people appear to have been raised in some degree to the religious level of their leader when he came among them; the consequence of all which was that the whole sublime enterprise which had been begun in prayer also continued and was ended in it: "Hear, O our God, for we are despised." "Think upon me, my God, for good." "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

This spirit did not make them cease from watching the schemes and movements of their enemies, but it kept them from fearing them. It did not withhold them from the use of every means that seemed adapted for their defence and safety; for Nehemiah tells us that they "watched as well as prayed," and that even while they stood on the wall and built, they had a sword girded on their side, ready to be drawn against every Horonite or Ammonite or Arabian that might seek to stop the work of the Lord. But it made them hopeful of divine protection wher these means were used, and effectually preserved them from all fainting of heart or feebleness of hand, even when their enemies

were boldest and their difficulties and discouragements at the worst.

And joined with all these thoughts and exercises, the consideration which made Nehemiah strong, and by which he made the people united and invincible, was, that they were working and fighting on God's side, by God's command and with God's promised help: "The God of heaven, he will prosper us." "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible." And as a good man once said, "What God calls a man to do, he will carry him through. I would undertake to govern half a dozen worlds if God called me to do it, but I would not undertake to govern half a dozen sheep unless God called me to do it."

It is remarkable how this consciousness of laboring and fighting in God's cause and by God's command has sometimes imparted to a whole people a kind of supernatural strength, and given them an invincibility and a power which no mere earthly element could ever have communicated. In the brightest times of Jewish history, it enabled the chosen race to "do exploits, and to turn to flight the armies of the aliens." And what armies, in the annals of our own nation, ever proved themselves so invincible as those in whom natural bravery was refined, elevated and confirmed by the sense of a divine cause and by religious fervor? "Call you this madness? Madness lies close by, as madness does to the highest wisdom in man's life always; but this is not mad. The dark element; it is the mother of the lightnings and the splendors; it is very sure, this."

# XXXVII.

## SIMEON.

WE at once dismiss from our notice those numerous childish legends and crude fancies that have descended in the false gospels and in other ancient but unauthorized writings regarding this venerable man, and form our mental portrait of him from the few bold outlines that have been sketched by Luke; only remarking that nothing tends to produce a stronger presumption in proof of the inspiration of the four Gospels than the contrast which their contents, and even their wise reticence, afford, to those garrulous traditions which have dared to borrow their name. The two classes of writings are not separated from each other by a faint and shadowy outline, but by a distance almost as great as that which stretches between heaven and earth.

Simeon is described by Luke as "a just and devout man;" that is, one who united in his character habitual integrity in his transactions and intercourse among men, with sincere and unaffected piety toward God. The two classes of duties should be regarded by us as inseparable as Christ's seamless robe; and where there is true love to God in the heart, there will be no attempt to separate them. When Solomon, in that memorable judgment which made him famous throughout the land, called for a sword and proposed to divide the child in two and give a half to each of the two women who pretended to be its mother,

the true mother was at once revealed in her who would on no account consent to the separation.

Simeon is further represented as "waiting for the consolation of Israel." This was one of the most common and beautiful names with which good men in those times were accustomed to speak of the Messiah. I do not think that the designation was derived from any particular passage in the ancient Scriptures, but rather from the characteristic practice of the prophets, in all times of present calamity or of near and foreseen distress, to encourage and support their countrymen by the prospect of the coming of Christ. In the darkest night of Jewish adversity this light was kept shining above the horizon, to keep the hearts of individuals from fainting and the national hope from sinking; as when Isaiah introduced one of the most glowing pictures of the advent and kingdom of the Messiah with these words: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." The universal voice of all prophecy respecting Christ might be regarded as gathering itself into one in this beautifully tender description of him as "the consolation of Israel."

Now, innumerable facts make it evident that there was a general expectation spread over the whole Jewish nation at this period of the early appearance of the Messiah. But among the mass of the people this sentiment had more in it of a kind of wild patriotism than of religious aspiration, and mainly consisted in a desire for national independence and an ambition for temporal aggrandizement. The national mind imagined in itself a Messiah and a gospel like to itself. But in the midst of this, there was a little band whose conceptions of Christ and his kingdom were far more scriptural and spiritual, and who, if they entertained hopes of temporal advantage from the advent to their nation—as we know some of them did—yet, in their stronger desires and more intense longings, wished for the great event chiefly because of its religious benefits to themselves and to others. To this little company belonged Zacharias and Elisabeth,

the eleven faithful apostles, Simeon and others. They were a church within the Church—the true Israel of those times—dwelling on

"A little spot enclosed by grace,
Saved from the world's vast wilderness."

Diligent students of prophecy and devout observers of providence, they watched the signs of the approaching King which might be read in these two heavens with more absorbing interest than astronomer kept vigil on the movements of the stars. Oh, to behold Him whose coming had, four thousand years before, been the subject of divine promise at the gates of Eden—whose day, beheld from afar by Abraham in the gray dawn-time, had made the great patriarch's heart glad—who had been the theme of Daniel's most magnificent revelations, of Isaiah's grandest pictures, of David's noblest psalms—whose name had evoked the richest notes from the lyre of ancient prophecy, whatever seer's hand swept its strings—who was to be the reality and the substance of all types and ceremonies—who was to bind up the bleeding wounds of his own Israel and to give a new life to the world! "We have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

"O living Sun! with joy break forth,
And pierce the gloomy clefts of earth;
Behold the mountains melt away
Like wax beneath thine ardent ray.

"O Life-dew of the churches! come
And bid this arid desert bloom;
The sorrows of thy people see,
And take our human flesh on thee."

These sublime desires of Simeon and of other holy watchers of his times were themselves the harbingers of the approaching Christ; according to the beautiful saying of Leighton, that a good father awakes his children when he knows that it is near to sunrise.

And another law of the divine kingdom was now to be exemplified in this venerable saint. For just as those who climb to

the top of the mountain catch the rays of the great luminary while others are still sleeping in darkness in the valley beneath, so is it the manner of our Father in heaven to satisfy the longing soul with the most abundant knowledge of himself. I conceive Simeon to have by this time become an old man with hoary head and snow-white beard, and while he had already, through the study of providence and prophecy and the illuminations of the divine Spirit helping him "to attain to something of prophetic strain," been brought to the firm belief that it was near the dawn of the kingdom of God, there mingled with this joyful conviction the fear that he should not be allowed to remain so long on earth as to behold "the Lord's Christ come to his own." By a special revelation he is assured that this reigning wish of his heart shall be satisfied to the full; that the grave shall have no power to claim his dust until he has "hailed the rise of this better Sun;" that "he shall not see death until he has seen the Lord's Christ."

II. The manner in which this remarkably gracious promise was accomplished now falls to be considered by us. It is just thirty days since Jesus had been born at Bethlehem, and now Joseph and Mary, in conformity with one of the most beautiful appointments of the Jewish ceremonial, appear in the temple at Jerusalem to present their infant before the Lord. The origin of this custom stands historically connected with that memorable night of the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage, when the Lord smote every first-born child of the Egyptians, but saved every first-born child of the Israelites alive. In grateful commemoration of that great event, every first-born male child among the Jews was appointed to be "holy to the Lord." And when, at a later period of the nation's history, God chose the members of the tribe of Levi, in room of the first-born, as sacred to his service; still, in order to keep alive among the Israelites the remembrance of this original arrangement and of the ground on which it rested, the first-born of every

family was required to be presented before the Lord in the temple, and redeemed by a money payment of five shekels.

It is to discharge this seemly service that Mary now enters the temple, accompanied by her husband Joseph, and bearing in her arms the infant Christ. But in what profound and varied meanings, of which those parents themselves could only as yet have the most dim apprehensions, might it be said of this child that he was "holy to the Lord"! He was, in truth, the only perfectly holy child that had ever been born, absolutely free from every taint of sin—"that holy thing," as the angel had called him when he foretold his birth to his wondering mother; whose future earthly life was not to need, like that of other children, to have its errors corrected and its depravity uprooted, but to be the gradual unfolding, amid the mists and damps of earth, of a celestial flower that should "shed around it the fragrance of other worlds." Moreover, this child was to be the temple of the divinity in whom should "dwell all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and, as the servant of his divine Father in the economy of grace, was to be the Saviour of men, and to bear upon his shoulder the government of the Church and of the universe. In sober truth it might be said that in his higher nature he had presented himself before his Father in the eternal counsels of peace "ere ever the earth was," and then had consecrated himself to the stupendous work of mercy for which he had now taken our humanity upon him and come into the world.

This consecration had indeed been announced from the beginning of time in continually-expanding prophecy, in which a voice seemed ever to cry, "Lo, I come." And now behold the words of Malachi are fulfilled: "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple;" and his presence in it is enough to make this second temple more glorious by far than the first. Everything that is placed in this sacred structure, everything that is performed in it—its furniture, its sacrifices, its waving of incense, its various other rites—are but the pictures and shadows

of what he is or of what he is to be. The temple is, in this view of it, like a vast apartment covered with mirrors, every one of which reflects his image. And yet there is nothing now in his outward appearance to indicate his hidden greatness. There is no play of a visible glory upon his infant countenance to distinguish him from other children. On the other hand, there are the marks of poverty and humiliation. His parents are so poor that his youthful mother has been obliged to substitute a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons as the alternative offering in room of the lamb which mothers were required to offer in connection with the rite of purification. For

> "Thou didst come,
> O holiest! to this world of sin and gloom,
> Not in thy dread omnipotent array;
> And not by thunder strewed
> Was thy tempestuous road,
> Nor indignation burned before thee on thy way.
> But thee, a soft and naked child,
> Thy mother undefiled
> In the rude manger laid to rest,
> From off her virgin breast."

Who, then, shall be the first to welcome the infant King to his palace—the Lord to his temple?

While the humble parents are proceeding with this seemly act, the aged Simeon enters the courts of the Lord's house, and is the first of all human beings to hail in the temple the presence of its divine owner. It had been his practice and his delight to frequent these sacred gates—"he had been there and still would go;" but he is led hither on this particular occasion by a special divine impulse. As we call to mind the words of the evangelist, that "the Holy Ghost was upon him," and that "he came by the Spirit into the temple," we may picture to ourselves the venerable saint and seer, in Milton's grand words, as coming in

> "With even step and musing gait,
> And looks commercing with the skies,
> His rapt soul sitting in his eyes."

He turns to the virgin mother holding her infant in her arms in the attitude of presentation, and is unerringly and instantly led by the Spirit to recognize in the child the "desire of nations" and the "consolation of Israel." It is an idle question to ask in what manner Simeon became assured of this fact; for surely if the human architect who plans and builds a material structure is acquainted with its most hidden apartments, and knows all its exits and its entrances, how much more must He who made the human soul have modes of acting upon it of which we are ignorant, and know the way to its most secret springs?

It is of more importance to remark that the manner in which Simeon recognized the infant Redeemer affords a striking proof of the strength of his faith. He was not offended at his lowly circumstances, or stumbled by the absence of every outward mark of his divine royalty. If it be said that the supernatural impression under which he acted sufficiently accounts for this, it ought to be remembered that there have been men who, after receiving a divine communication and listening to a heavenly voice, have immediately asked for an additional sign in order to confirm their faith. We therefore account in great part for Simeon's prompt and unhesitating recognition of the Christ in this lowly child by the fact that he had long been so devout and diligent a student of the Old Testament Scriptures. There his mental "eye had been anointed with eye-salve," and he had been taught to look for a suffering Messiah; "for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." These outward signs of humiliation had accordingly no effect in disturbing his faith or damping his joy. Yea, not content with seeing the holy child in the arms of his mother, in the fine exuberance and almost ecstasy of his gratitude, the aged saint takes the infant into his own withered arms, embraces him, presses him to his heart, and sends up an ascription of praise to God which the Church for eighteen hundred years has treasured as among the richest utterances of inspired worship.

The outward exercise was, in fact, a most beautiful reflection and expression of the inward sentiment—a kind of enacted faith. For what is saving faith but a recognition of Christ as the divinely-appointed and divine Saviour, and a grateful appropriation of him as our Saviour? Do not love to Christ and joy in him mingle with faith as its first-fruits? And out of the abundance of the heart does not the mouth speak in "thanks unto God for his unspeakable gift"?

III. Let us now meditate on the ascription by Simeon—"the swan-song of the seer of the old covenant," as it has been happily called.

And those who meditate upon it with intelligence will not fail to be struck with the enlarged conceptions which he had formed of the extent to which the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom were designed to reach. For it is worthy of particular remark that in the various divine songs and thanksgivings in connection with the Saviour's birth which came from hallowed lips that had been touched with celestial fire—the inspired hymns of the nativity, as they might be fitly called—there was a progressive expansion of the scope of vision. Thus Mary's own hymn dwelt mainly upon the personal blessings and honors which the advent of the Christ was to bring to herself. The song of Zacharias celebrated its benefits to Abraham's race. In what Simeon now says in this grand burst of praise he goes far beyond them, and rising to an elevation and a range of view which were only reached by the apostles themselves after their Lord's resurrection and ascension, speaks, in his holy rapture, of Christ as "God's salvation, prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

He was emphatically "the glory of his people Israel," inasmuch as in his human relation he was one of themselves, of the seed of Abraham and the family of David. And far above the fact that God had taken them for so many ages into covenant

with himself—that they had received the law immediately from his hand amid the awful scenes and symbols of Sinai—that they had been the chosen guardians of the inspired oracles and custodians of the true worship—the apostle names it as the very climax and crown of their honor as a people that "of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ had come, who was over all, God blessed for ever."

And when Simeon further speaks of Jesus as "a light to lighten the Gentiles," he describes the true mission of his gospel as a world's religion, intended to drive away all error and superstition and idolatry and sin and misery from the earth, to bring men of every race and clime to the true knowledge of God, and to the enjoyment of happiness through the knowledge of himself.

His blessed words afford new evidence of the unwonted familiarity of Simeon with the lively oracles, for they echo back through the centuries those sublime words in which God had been prophetically represented as addressing the Messiah: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." And they further prove to us that the narrow notions commonly entertained by the Jews of those times, as if the benefits of Christ's kingdom were to be restricted to their nation, were, in fact, a degeneracy from the true faith, and a selfish lapsing from the expansive and benignant hopes of the best men under the older economy.

That sight of the "salvation of God" more than reconciled Simeon to the thought of dying. It had been promised to him that he "should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ," and this blessed hour had seen the promise fulfilled; but the very terms of the promise seemed also to indicate that the sight of Christ would mark the term of his continuance upon earth. And now that his arms at length embraced his Lord, he "could leave the world without a tear." It was enough for him

to have lived to witness this spectacle of the world's light and deliverer: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It is not a prayer for dismissal from the world, but a thankful utterance of belief that the hour of his departure is at hand, and a tranquil confidence that when that hour arrives, it will be a peaceful passing away from service to glory, honor and immortality. Even a pagan prince, in a day of great honor to his country, could exclaim, in a burst of patriotic gladness, "*Satis est vixisse*" ("It is sufficient for me to have lived to behold this"). Old Jacob, too, when his favorite son was restored to him after an interval of many checkered and sorrowful years in which he had believed him to be dead, had said with touching paternal tenderness, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." But Simeon, in what he now said, had infinitely better warrant for his words. A believing sight of Christ is that which enables us to look the king of terrors in the face without dread. With him embraced in the arms of our faith, we have the sure pledge of heaven, for "he that hath the Son hath life."

We cannot tell with anything like definiteness how far Simeon was enlightened in reference to the great facts of the Saviour's earthly history which were to form the basis and root of the consolations of his gospel; but he knew in general that he was to deliver his people from all their spiritual enemies, and that of these enemies death was one of the most formidable and the last; and this confidence breathed a life of joy through all these exulting words. But Christians who look back upon Christ's completed earthly life may now take up Simeon's ascription and sing it with a louder, sweeter note than his, for in his death they behold the ransom-price of their redemption, and in his resurrection and ascension the divine assurance of their own immortality and heavenly reward. The valley of the shadow of death has been lighted up by him all through with the undying lamps of his

own exceeding great and precious promises; and when the dying saint passes from their light, it will be into the midst of the unspeakably brighter light of that "city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

"How dreary would old age be," said John Foster once, "without the doctrine of the atonement! The exclusion of this from Christianity would reduce me instantly to black despair." But the belief of this truth, and of all that it draws after it, transmutes the dismal grave into a bed of spices, and "dying" is seen to be but "going home." We do not wonder that the Christians of earlier ages treated the funeral of their brethren as a kind of triumphal procession, and that Christians in the East preferred planting over the graves of their holy kindred the triumphal palm rather than the gloomy cypress. Those who have visited the catacombs at Rome, and compared the inscriptions on the tombs of heathens and of Christians, have been struck with the contrast between the despair of the one and the calm joy of the other. Here is thick shadow; there settled light. The sight which Simeon now beheld produced and explained the difference, for "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

The words of the rapt seer filled Mary and her husband with astonishment, especially when they added to these the earlier testimonies that had been given respecting their child. But they thought far more than they spoke. They could not fully comprehend the meaning of such language; it shone before them with an indistinct grandeur. They waited, therefore, the gradual interpretation of providential events, well assured that such utterances must be precursors of a most glorious history. But was there no danger, if this was all that was spoken, that our Lord's parents might be unduly elated by these revelations if they stood alone, or, at all events, that those sufferings of Jesus which were to precede the preaching of his gospel and the extension of his kingdom might disturb and even shake the Virgin's faith if she

were not forewarned of them? Accordingly, we find that Simeon proceeds with other inspired sayings necessary to the truthful shading of the picture. The wind of the Spirit passing over his soul causes it to emit sounds in which sadness largely mingles with joy.

IV. We now listen, then, to his prophecy. Having blessed them—that is, declared them to be blessed—Simeon said unto Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." This prophetic saying contains a reference to the Jewish nation, and describes the opposite effects which the appearance of Christ and his religion in the midst of them would produce, and a special reference to the Virgin personally.

When it is here declared that Christ was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel," some have imagined the language to describe the various stages in a soul's conversion, in which there are first the throes and anguish of conviction of sin, or the deep abasement of conscious ill-desert, and then the joys of faith and of acceptance with God. "For he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

It has been supposed by others that we have here two pictures of the future of the Israelitish nation; in the foreground, the tremendous judgments which the general rejection of Christ by that people would invoke upon them—judgments unparalleled alike in their severity and in their duration; and then in the background, the general repentance of that people, when they should return into the Church with the fullness of the Gentiles, when God would "lead his outcasts home," and they should "receive double for all their sins."

But it seems greatly more probable, when we place the different clauses of the inspired oracle together, that they were

intended to forecast the different kind of treatment which Christ and his gospel would receive from different classes of men. Many would recognize and welcome him; but others would oppose his cause and shut their eyes against his light, so much so that he might be described as a sign which should be spoken against—a butt or mark set up, against which multitudes would direct the shafts of bitter ridicule, of blind unbelief and malignant persecution. "Lo, the wicked would bend their bow, and make it ready; they would prepare their arrows against the innocent."

And operating in these directly opposite forms, into whatever community or circle the religion of Christ came, it would prove an infallible moral test of men's characters. "The thoughts of many hearts would thereby be revealed." For Christ, being the revealer of God—his express moral image in so complete a manner that "he that hath seen him hath seen the Father also"—and Christ's gospel and doctrine being the fullest and clearest revelation of God that ever was given to the world, it must be evident that the manner of their reception by different men showed with unerring certainty what was in them.

It was so during our Lord's ministry. Those who were devoutly "waiting for the consolation of Israel"—who were longing for deliverance from their sins—the men of spiritual susceptibilities and tastes—were attracted toward him, as to a mighty magnet, as soon as he was manifested. But on the other hand, in demanding of all his disciples a religion of the heart, and holding out to men a gratuitous mercy which humbled while it saved, Christ and his religion provoked the opposition of the proud and formal Pharisee; while, in requiring his followers to deny themselves and renounce every sinful inclination, were it dear even as a right hand or a right eye, he as certainly aroused against him the resentment and the scorn of the sensual Sadducee.

The representation of the gospel as meeting with these opposite kinds of treatment from men according to the nature of their

reigning dispositions, and thus acting, wherever it comes, as a touchstone of moral character, and in the very fact of revealing God becoming also a revelation of man, is by no means confined to these words of Simeon. The Bible, in both its parts, is full of it. To some, Christ was to be a foundation-stone, to others a stumbling-stone; to some he is to be a sanctuary, to others a snare; to some his gospel was to be "the savor of life unto life," to others "the savor of death unto death." He was set for the rising of many, but also for the fall of many in Israel.

We must take good heed, however, that we receive the truth with scriptural discrimination. The natural tendency and the proper effect of the gospel is to save men. But just as men may abuse and pervert others of God's gifts, such as health and talent and worldly competence, so it is possible, through persistent unbelief that hates the light in proportion as it loves sin, to turn the very "grace of God which bringeth salvation" into a means of their destruction. And on these accounts the gospel never leaves any man who hears it, morally, where it found him. If it do not save him, it will righteously aggravate his condemnation. "If I had not come, and done many mighty works among them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." The eternal doom of Sodom and Gomorrah will be nothing to that of the Christ-despiser.

These prophetic sayings of Simeon must have carried something of sorrowful surprise into the heart of Mary. But how would her amazement be deepened when she heard him intermingle with these that special warning to herself—"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also"! Whatever minor fulfillment these words may have received during our Lord's public ministry, in the injuries and insults to which she saw her divine Son subjected, their prophetic meaning unquestionably culminated in the dark hours of his crucifixion, when, as we are expressly told, "Mary stood by the cross of Jesus." She could not behold him receive a wound, or hear him utter a groan,

without her maternal heart being pierced through as with a sword. Ah! what must have been that virgin-mother's anguish for such a Son, when even the sun above suffered unnatural eclipse, the earth shuddered with pain, and, as has been grandly said, "there were the funeral griefs of the worlds"! Let no one presumptuously complain that it would have been better to have hidden this predestined agony from Mary until it came. The prediction might arise to her recollection in the hour of her anguish, and keep her faith from sinking, so that, unless she had "hidden this word in her heart," she might have "perished in her affliction." These were the shadows on this prophetic picture; but the light immeasurably exceeded the shadows, in the promise of the extending and ultimately universal triumphs of the Messiah's kingdom, that he "should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

We now recur to the great central fact of the narrative, for the purpose of remarking that, in the Lord's Supper, we do in spirit what Simeon now did. In receiving the bread and wine, which are the appointed symbols of Christ and his atoning death, we by faith receive Christ himself, appropriate and embrace him as our Saviour. He who does this need not fear death nor any evil, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Let him who reads this ask the question of his own soul, "Have I embraced the Lord's Christ?" Particularly, let aged saints who are standing on the verge of the grave—on whose head the almond tree doth flourish—to whom the grasshopper has become a burden, and on whom eternity is beginning to throw its mysterious gleams through the growing shades of evening-life—cultivate the mental attitude and exercise of this old believer, and with Christ in their arms, find earth bereft of its attractions and the grave of its terrors, and be ready at any moment to "shake hands with death, and smile that they are free."

"Oh, long to be installed in the throne
Of endless glory: let thy spirit groan

After a long and plenary possession
Of blessedness transcending all expression.
Sing Simeon's swan-like song at his decease—
'Lord, let thy servant now depart in peace.'"

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## WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION.

Waiting,
Just as devout and hoary Simeon stood, stand we,
Just as old Anna, numbering each night and day,
The consolation of God's Israel to see.

Wishing,
Not now the Father's grace to one lorn nation here;
Not now the Son as Priest, our guilt and grief to bear,
And to be crowned with thorns and pierced by Gentile spear.

Watching
For that new consolation which shall win the lost,
Those heavenly gifts, long promised, of the Holy Ghost,
That latter, greater than the primal, Pentecost

Wondering,
That He who holds those winds of heaven in his fist
Should stay their blowing to revive us as they list;
From watering his garden should avert the mist.

Wailing
The adulterous love of many to the world—
Its riches, friendships, pleasures; and the Sovereign hurled
From his high throne, his glorious banner fouled and furled.

Waiting,
In faith and patience, as did Simeon of erst;
In fasts and prayer, as Anna; till the dawn shall burst
Of that great consolation round the earth long curst—

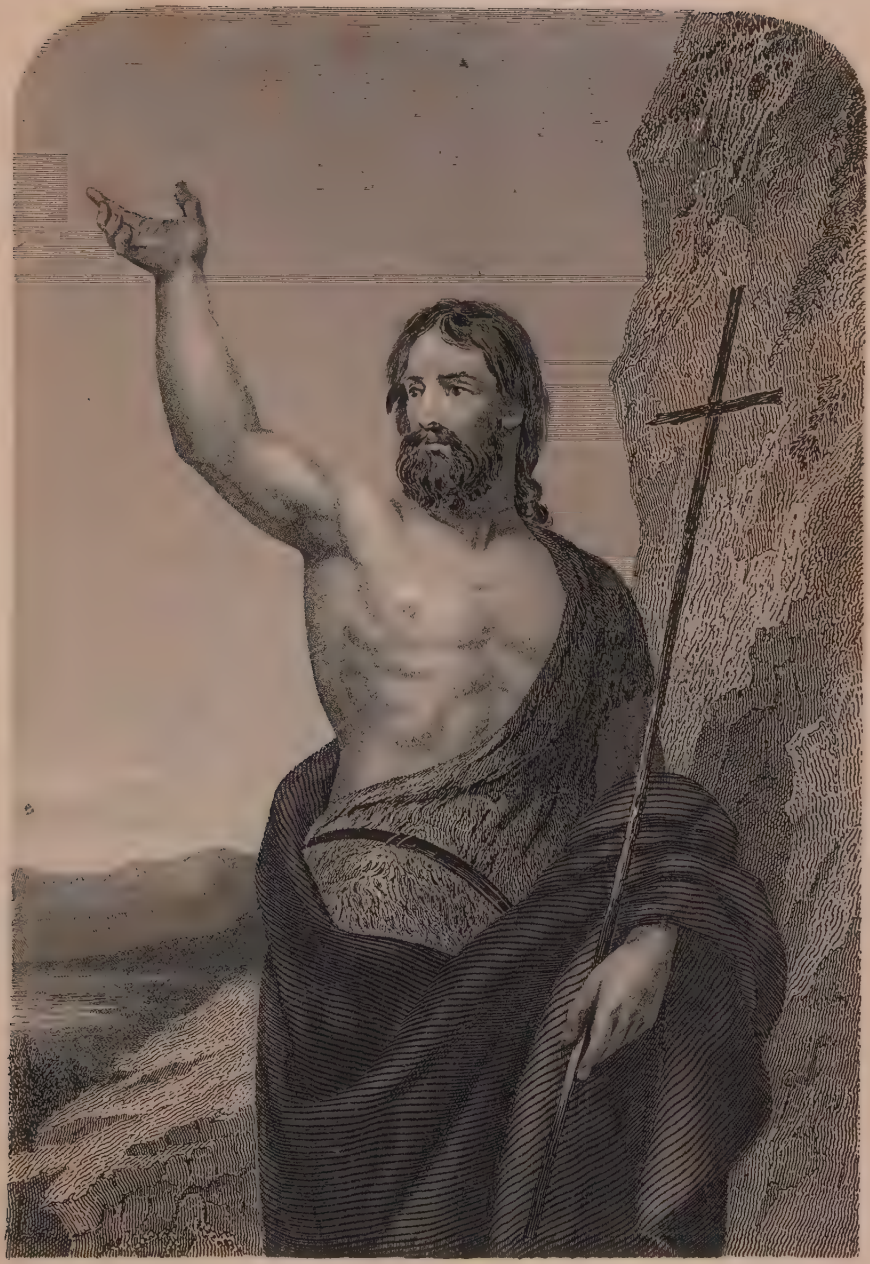
Waiting
The consolation that shall turn to bread earth's stones,
The consolation that shall hush creation's groans,
That shall make manifest and glorious God's sons.

# XXXVIII.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST.

WERE the question to be addressed to a number of persons in succession, "What are the qualities necessary to constitute human greatness, and which would justify us in applying to the individuals in whom they are found the epithet of 'great men'?" we should certainly be surprised at the variety of the answers, and at the frequency and perversity with which the epithet was misapplied. With persons of the more earthly and vulgar sort, we should be mortified to discover that elevation in social rank, or vast accumulations of wealth, or nobility of descent, or the simple possession of power, in whatever manner acquired or employed, constituted, in their judgment, the chief elements of human greatness.

With a much greater number, perhaps, in these times, the possession of high intellectual gifts realizes their highest conception of a great man, even should those gifts be used by him simply for his own selfish ends, or perverted to the injury of his species, and intellect without God is almost deified and adored, according to the modern fashion of hero-worship. Talent receives far more homage from thousands than the highest and purest forms of virtue, and genius is pleaded as more than half an apology and compensation for its debasement to the worst ends and its association with the most malignant passions or the foulest vices. There is a glory and a splendor to the eyes of such men in the mere manifestations of power that dazzles their



*John the Baptist*

minds and confounds all their moral distinctions, even when that power is put forth, like the blind strength of Samson, to shake the pillars of the social edifice.

It is well for us, in the midst of these crude and injurious notions, to come to the Bible for the rectification and the guidance of our moral judgments, and to learn from it what, in the estimate of angels and of God himself, constitutes true human greatness. And an example suitable to our purpose rises up before us in the character of John the Baptist, of whom it was announced by an angel to his father before he was born, that he should be great, not in man's account mainly, but in the judgment of the infinite mind—"great in the sight of the Lord." Let us proceed to inquire what were those qualities in John which formed the element and secret of his greatness, and which afforded ground for this infallible, because divine, description of him.

Now, it is remarkable that we do not find prominent in John the Baptist any one of those elements which commonly go to make up the world's idea of greatness. He could not lay claim to high social status, or boast that

> "He derived his birth
> From loins enthroned, or great ones of the earth;"

though neither was he mean in his origin, for he was the son of a devout priest, Zacharias by name, and of Elisabeth his wife. He was not born rich, nor did he ever rise to wealth; but throughout his whole life his resources were as limited as his wants were few. His food was such as the wilderness in which he dwelt spontaneously afforded—locusts and wild honey; and his raiment, in keeping with his scanty diet, was a garment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins—not the purple and the silk which, as our Lord expresses it when speaking of John, were "worn in kings' palaces."

We do not trace in him any of that fine poetic genius which, apart from inspiration, was native to some of the earlier prophets, such as David and Isaiah. Nor was he trained in the learning

of the Jews in any of the great schools or universities of his time, like Saul of Tarsus, afterward, at the feet of Gamaliel. For until he came forth in his public ministry at a ripe age, his life was spent among his native mountains of Judah—not, indeed, in monastic seclusion, as some have strangely supposed, but in comparative retirement—in familiarity with Nature in all her moods of storm and calm, of gloom and sunshine, and in all her changeful aspects of Oriental beauty and sublimity; and still more in the high converse of his soul with God, in the reading of his word and in prayer. With some modifications, we may apply to him the words of one of our older poets:

> "The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
> His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
> Remote from man, with God he pass'd the days,
> Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise."

It is even expressly intimated that "John did no miracle." And yet, in the face of all these facts, we find the heavenly messenger declaring to his father, before his birth, that he should be "great in the sight of the Lord;" and our Lord saying of him, after his brief earthly ministry was ended, that of them that had been born of woman, there had not appeared a greater than John the Baptist. If, then, these common elements of a mere worldly greatness were wanting in John, where shall we discover those qualities and facts which warrant and sustain the singularly significant estimate given of him both by the angel and by the Lord of angels? I have two answers to this question.

I. The greatness of John the Baptist, in the sight of the Lord, consisted, to a great extent, in his distinguished moral excellences. This is evident from the delighted approval with which our Lord dwells upon these, as often as he speaks of this "burning and shining light" to his disciples and to the people. And the principle which runs through all the moral teaching of the Bible, whenever it touches on this subject, is, that man is great just in the

degree in which he is Godlike, and that there is no real greatness in a human character, when weighed in the golden balances of heaven, where moral goodness is wanting.

When the disciples on one memorable occasion sought to attract the notice of their Master to the material temple at Jerusalem, with its goodly stones, its rich ornaments, its vast proportions and its magnificent architecture, his answer was, "Is this what you are looking at?" and immediately he turned their attention to something far more interesting—the magnanimous act of self-denial of the poor widow as she was casting her two mites, which were all her living, into the temple treasury. The man of high intellectual gifts without holiness is only regarded by the unfallen angels as on this account the more vast and mournful a ruin. It is not unlikely that Satan is the most powerful of all created minds in the universe, and therefore the man who is content to admire unsanctified intellect would only be consistent in reserving his chief admiration for that prince of devils who said to evil, "Be thou my good." There is no reason to question that John was a man of remarkable native force of intellect; but whenever Jesus dilates with complacency on his forerunner, it is not of this that he once speaks as forming the element of his greatness, but of the rare grandeur and beauty of his character as a man of God.

Nor must the fact be overlooked that John's position and work were such as to test his moral integrity and strength to the utmost, and to "prove him as by fire." There are men whose virtues are of that easy kind which are in a good degree to be accounted for by the mere absence of temptation; the hidden sediment of corruption that is within them is never brought to the surface. But John was exposed to a succession of ordeals of such severity that everything must have perished before it but what was genuine and divine. His special mission was to announce to the Jews the near approach of their Messiah, to bring them into a state of moral preparation for his reception, and to

identify and mark him out to the people after he had come. From the beginning he appears to have formed the most correct and definite conceptions of the work which was thus given him to do. It must be evident, however, that both the work itself and the state of Jewish society at the period required for its discharge a rare combination of the highest forms of moral excellence. But John showed himself to possess these; and as opposition and adversity gathered and deepened around him, the moral grandeur of his character shone out the more brightly, like the stars at midnight, until the unerring Judge could declare of him with loving testimony, after his brief but effective ministry was ended, "John fulfilled his course." Thus was he "great in the sight of the Lord." To bring out this more vividly, it is necessary that we enter a little into detail.

1. It must be evident that the state of society among the Jews when John appeared was such as that he needed for his work an extraordinary measure of moral intrepidity. He found them divided into two great and powerful religious parties: on the one hand the Pharisees, who were formal without being devout; punctilious about trifles, but disregardful of the weightier matters of the law; impatient of opposition, and malignantly resentful against every one that questioned their authority; proud of their descent from Abraham, as constituting them a sort of peerage of the human race, and confiding in it as their sure passport to heaven: and on the other hand the Sadducees, who were the rationalists of their times; skeptical not from their love of truth, but from indifference to it; affecting a proud intellectualism in their conversation, but self-indulgent and sensual in their lives. It evidently required one from whose breast the fear of God had driven out every other fear to step forth from his wilderness a solitary witness for God, and confront these dominant sectaries and their leaders, and, unbacked by popular support or influence of any kind, without apology or compromise, in plain, unvarnished words to tell them of their danger, their duties and their sins.

But the brave preacher was equal to his task. Hear how he seeks to awaken the Pharisee from his self-satisfied dream by addressing him in these words of unwonted fidelity: "Think not to say within yourselves that we have Abraham for our father, for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Mark how he flashes in upon the unwilling conscience of the Sadducee thoughts of the retributions of an immortal world, and warns him "to flee from the wrath to come." And when he passes up from the banks of the Jordan to the court of the Galilean tetrarch, royal crime finds no shelter from the shafts of his stern rebuke. The frowns of Herod cannot terrify him, or his caresses and flatteries make him "prophesy smooth things," or turn aside for a moment the bolt which he has made ready for the incestuous ruler: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

Nor is he less faithful and fearless when addressing the vast multitudes of the common people as they come streaming from all quarters of the land to the banks of the Jordan to his baptism. Our Lord himself specially notices the fact that he was no supple and pliant moralist, accommodating himself to the popular prejudices, and trimming his sails to catch the current of human applause with the view of turning it to base and selfish ends. He was no "reed shaken with the wind." But, aware of the corrupt and worldly motives that had borne the greater number of them into his presence, he denounced them as a brood of serpents, "a generation of vipers," and called them to choose between immediate repentance and early and awful retribution: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." As soon might you have moved the sun in the heavens from his course as have turned from his duty this stern reformer, standing in God's name with the winnowing fan of his ministry of repentance. Such moral intrepidity, as "among innumerable incorrupt he stood," was a

"spectacle for angels," and made him "great in the sight of the Lord."

2. Self-renouncing humility was another distinguishing excellence of the character of John. At the moment when his popularity was at its flood-tide, and when he needed only to give the smallest whisper of encouragement in order to bring the highest honors to his feet, Christ appeared; and now it became his duty, instead of continuing to gather disciples to himself, to point and lead them to the Saviour, and as soon as possible to disappear and be forgotten amid the blaze of his surpassing glory. But it required no common degree of virtue in John's heart to do this willingly and without a grudge. There is a fascination in power and influence when once possessed; and hence we see men so often lingering on the stage of public life when they should have quitted it, and loth to abandon a sphere which they are no longer qualified to fill. Even men of unquestioned religious worth have found it difficult to renounce position and power and to consent without a murmur that others should occupy the place which they had once held.

Think of what was now required of John. To-day he was filling all eyes, to-morrow he was to be nothing. John's own disciples, though sincerely good men, were not all at once equal to this high duty. We can trace the workings of rivalry and envy in those words which really convey a complaint in the form of information: "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, baptizeth, and all men come to him." They grudged to see another occupying the place in men's attention which he had so lately occupied, and which had shed down a certain amount of reflected honor upon themselves, and they strove to awaken the same jealous feelings in his magnanimous breast.

But the soul of this true moral hero dwelt and moved in a pure and elevated region to which such foul mists as these seldom or never ascend. Instead of expressing any sympathy with their complaint, their words drew from him a noble response, which

not only showed how clearly he apprehended the relation in which he stood officially to the Messiah, and how cordially he rejoiced in his extending honors, but that he even saw the very ends of his mission and ministry accomplished in those triumphs, and instead of depreciating or grudging them as his disciples did, gratefully hailed them as his highest possible reward. As if he had said, "My work is crowned when I see the tide of popular interest flowing to his feet. For this end came I into the world. I am only a voice sent to prepare the way of the Lord. I am not the bridegroom, but the bridegroom's friend. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

3. We notice, as a third distinguishing characteristic of John, his faith in God in the midst of dark providences. His fidelity in reproving the criminality of Herod and in calling his adulterous life by its right name having awakened the implacable resentment of Herodias, the tetrarch's associate in sin, had occasioned his being cast into prison, with the likelihood of his being put at any moment to a violent death. His disciples cling to him in his adversity, and occasionally communicate with him in his confinement, and among other intelligence which they bear to him from the world without inform him of the great miracles which Jesus is performing, and of the multitudes which are flocking eagerly around him to hear his words. But this intelligence appears to have been coupled with expressions of doubt on the part of John's disciples as to whether this new teacher that had arisen could be the Messiah or not. Perhaps they thought with themselves that, if he were indeed the Christ whose advent their master had so joyfully announced, and for whose fit reception he had so earnestly labored to prepare the minds of the people, he would certainly have interposed, in some form or other, to set their master at liberty.

Every one knows that evil surmisings and suspicions, which would never have arisen spontaneously in the mind of a good man like John, yet, when injected into his mind by others, may rankle and fester there like an arrow tipped with poison. Besides, who is a stranger to the influence of outward circumstances over his thoughts, casting shadow or sunshine over them? It is easy, therefore, to conceive that the darkness and solitude of those dungeon walls, on the margin of the Dead Sea, might at length have helped to awaken in the Baptist's mind gloomy thoughts of divine Providence, and to make him wonder why more direct and open sympathy was not shown to him by Jesus. It may even be conjectured that, having come, as he knew, "in the spirit and power of Elias," he had expected that his end would also more nearly resemble his, and that if not translated to heaven in a chariot of fire, without tasting of death, he would not, at all events, be permitted to close his life amid the ignominy of a prison and by the executioner's sword.

These are thoughts and feelings which we can imagine to have been suggested to the mind of John in his dungeon solitude, not only by flesh and blood, but even by weak faith, and which, if they had been encouraged and indulged by him, would have stood in too close connection with rebellious murmurings and hard thoughts of God. But no such unworthy sentiments appear to have even once disturbed the calm trust of this afflicted confessor; not one complaint or querulous questioning is echoed by those damp dungeon walls. Great in service, he becomes even greater in endurance, though subjected through long weeks to protracted waiting and suffering, which have often worn out the patience even of eminent saints of God, and which are far more hard to bear than one sharp but brief affliction.

It has indeed been imagined by some that the message which he sent to Jesus by certain of his disciples from his prison—"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"—was

meant to express his own rising doubts in reference to the fact of our Lord's Messiahship. But it was far more probably intended to resolve the doubts of his disciples, by making them the actual eye-witnesses of the Saviour's wonderful works, and to bring them into more loving and intimate connection with him. His faith rode triumphant through all that trying season, until it changed into sight amid the bright visions of the immortal world. Unjustly imprisoned—imprisoned for his very fidelity to God and virtue—his light hidden in the very noontide of his usefulness—allowed to remain in prison and to linger out his days in inaction there, with no message to explain or outward event to mitigate the providence—he calmly waited the explanations of the heavenly world, and when all was dark around him, said in his heart, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Thus was he "great in the sight of the Lord."

II. But when we have thus ascribed some of the highest forms of moral excellence to the Baptist, we have not exhausted the meaning of that angelic prediction of him which we have been endeavoring to illustrate. His greatness in part arose also out of that official relation in which he was to stand to Christ as the Saviour of the world. This relation was to be singular and glorious—such, in some respects, as no other being had occupied or could afterward occupy. For, as the angel expresses it in making the announcement, he was "to go before the Messiah," and "to make ready a people to welcome him;" and when at length the Saviour emerged from the obscurity of his private life into the full blaze of his public ministry, he was to point him out to the notice and the faith of men, and to say, "This is he of whom I spake."

And not only in the manner in which he did this, but in the very fact itself that he was called to the discharge of so unique and high an office, he was "great in the sight of the Lord." It is on this account mainly—if I do not greatly mistake—that we

find Jesus declaring of John that he was "not only a prophet, but more than a prophet," and even announcing, in the most unqualified terms, that at the period of his birth there had not a greater been born of woman than John the Baptist.

The prophets that had preceded him for four thousand years had merely foretold the Messiah as coming some time in the remote future, and even these predictions had usually been shrouded in types, or in language more or less dimly figurative. It was the peculiar honor and privilege of John that he could not only point forward to the Messiah as coming, and as even at the door, but that he should be the first of all human beings to identify and point him out as come. The culminating moment in his ministry was when he could stretch out his hand to Jesus of Nazareth and say, with divinely-inspired certainty, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" There is the great personage for whom the world has been waiting for innumerable ages—"the desire of all nations"—to whom type and oblation and prophecy have been pointing from the beginning of time—for whose advent all the past has unconsciously travailed as it were in birth—God's Lamb, who is to do in reality what the sacrifices of bulls and goats and lambs have only done typically—to bear, and by bearing to bear away, the sin of the world.

Now, to stand nearest to this illustrious Deliverer and Redeemer—to be the first of all the human race to recognize him and lead men to him—was an honor which Abraham and Moses and Isaiah and Elijah and Daniel would have coveted, and which they would willingly have exchanged all their own peculiar honors to possess, and in the possession of which John was raised above all other prophets—above all others that had been born of women. And in these facts the words of the angel were illustrated and vindicated to the full, which foretold that he should be "great in the sight of the Lord."

There are certain conclusions of great moment which arise out of this course of illustrative remark. One of these has respect to the dignity of Christ and to the importance of the work which he specially came into the world to accomplish. If John derived such singular honor from merely being the herald and harbinger of Christ—if to have been permitted to stand nearest to him in the grand procession of typical personages and prophets that had heralded his coming down through all the past centuries, and to have been the first to identify and proclaim him when he appeared, was enough to constitute him the greatest of those who had been born of women—then how great must Christ himself be! When we look on the long procession of kings and prophets that had been moving before him in stately majesty for so many thousands of years, we expect that the Being whom they shall at length introduce shall be immeasurably greater in dignity than any of them—that, in the highest sense, he shall be the Son of God. There would have been an inconceivable incongruity in the fact of so many prophets only leading in a prophet.

And surely the special work of such a personage so announced and introduced must be something unspeakably greater than a mere prophet's work, else why should not a mere prophet have been commissioned to accomplish it? We irresistibly conclude that, when such a personage came into the world, it was on an extraordinary mission corresponding to his dignity and power. And thus the belief of our Lord's divinity leads us by a strong presumption to the belief of his atonement, and both doctrines are seen to be necessary in order to harmonize the facts and statements of Scripture one with another.

And should it not be our habitual and earnest aim to have our dispositions and our lives brought into conformity with the principle we have been illustrating? Let us seek to become greatly good that we may become truly great. In the training and educating of our children, while we diligently and dutifully

exert ourselves to store their minds with useful knowledge, and to strengthen and discipline their mental powers, let us place far above this the educating of their hearts—the leading of them, with divine help, to be pure and truthful and benignant and devout and Christ-like—not so much to find them clever children as to make them good and Godlike men. There was not only a beautiful amiability, but a scripturally-enlightened appreciation of the highest form of excellence, in the saying of the late Dr. Arnold, in regard to one of his pupils who was somewhat dull and slow of intellect, but who dutifully did his best with the powers that God had given him, that he felt such sincere respect and even reverence for the boy that he could have taken off his hat before him when he met him.

But surely we may say to those who are satisfying themselves with aiming at some of the forms of a merely human greatness, "Where will ye leave your glory?" You cannot carry one of these things with you into the great world which is the goal of your earthly existence; they shrivel into nothing, like the dead leaves of autumn, when the winter of death approaches, and even intellectual gifts will only be of any value to you in eternity according as you have faithfully used them for God here. Oh, aim, then, supremely at that moral excellence which transcends every other kind of greatness as heaven is above the earth; for "greater is he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city."

On one occasion, when the nobility of France were assembled to listen to the funeral sermon of the greatest of French monarchs, the preacher solemnly exclaimed, in presence of the inanimate body of him who, a few months before, had made the nations tremble, "Brethren, God alone is great," and then paused. And the preacher's words were true. God alone is great, and all the true greatness that can belong to any of his creatures must arise from their possession of Godlike qualities. Cultivate, then, like the holy Baptist, a spirit of moral in-

trepidity, of self-renouncing humility, of filial trust in God. Learn to conciliate an enemy, and to

> "Subdue your pride
> To the forgetting of a wrong that whets
> The sword to think on."

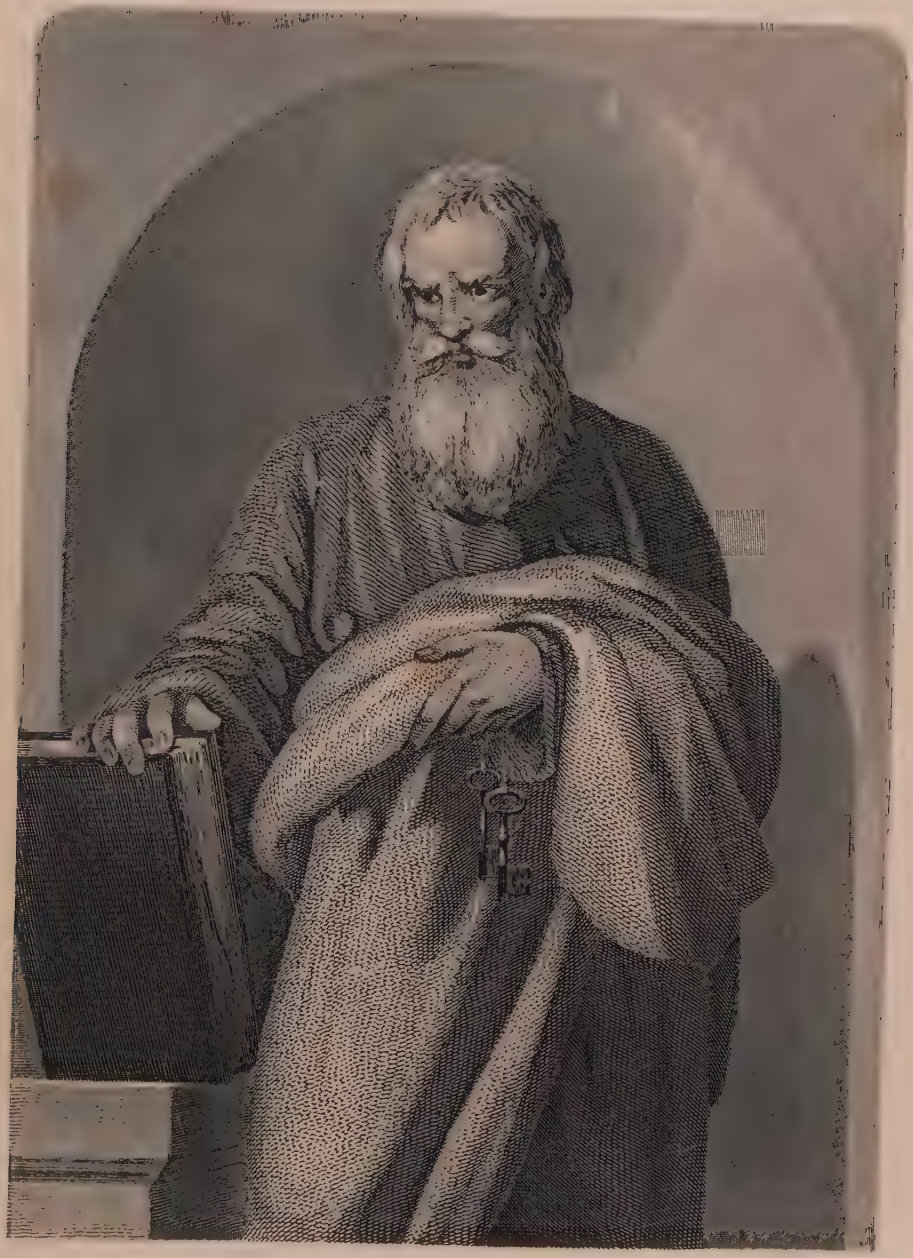
Lead men to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and then, like John, you shall be truly great, for you shall be "great in the sight of the Lord."

# XXXIX.

## PETER.

AMONGST the mountains of Galilee, amidst the recollections of those heroic tribes who had once "jeopardied their lives unto the death" against the host of Jabin, under the very shadow of those ancient hills which had once echoed the triumphant strains of Deborah and of Barak, was nursed that burning zeal, that unbroken patriotism, which made the name of Galilean so formidable even to the legions of the empire. There, far removed from the mingled despotism and corruption of the schools and courts of Jerusalem, out of the country from which the chief priests and scribes were proudly convinced that no prophet could arise, we might fairly look for the freer and purer development of those older yearnings after the future, of that undying trust in the invisible, which had once characterized the Jewish race—for an ardent hope of the promised deliverance, yet not hardened into formalism by the traditions of the Pharisee—for a soaring aspiration after divinity not yet chained to earth by the unbelief of the Sadducees.

Such were all the Galilean apostles—such especially was Simon, surnamed the Rock. No priest of the house of Levi, no warrior of the host of Judah, ever burnt with more fervent zeal in behalf of God's chosen people; no prophet ever waited in more rapt expectation for the hope of the coming Deliverer, as it dawned upon him through the earthly images which bounded his imme-



Peter

diate view in Babylon or Edom or Jerusalem, than did the fisherman of Galilee as he hung upon the words and looks of that unknown Teacher who appeared on the shores of his native lake. Gradually, dimly, doubtfully, the vision rose within his mind; sometimes an awful consciousness of some divine presence, which, like Gideon or Manoah, he "prayed to depart from him;" sometimes of an earthly empire, in which they who had "left all and followed him" should reign as satraps of the King of Zion; sometimes of the blaze of glory which rested on the ancient tabernacle, as when he woke upon the holy mount and spake "not knowing what he said." But, amidst all these dark and wavering images, his face was set in the right direction, and therefore, in that memorable scene of which every detail of place and circumstance is described to us with unusual precision, when at Cæsarea Philippi, far withdrawn from the gaze of the multitude beneath the snowy heights of Hermon, the question was solemnly put—"But whom say ye that I am?"—the heavenly truth flashed upon him, and his whole being expressed himself in the words which did indeed contain the meeting point between the two dispensations: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" the anointed Messiah, whom prophets and kings have desired to see; the Son of Him who once again, as at the burning bush, had come with ever-living power to visit and redeem his people. Well might the solemn blessing which follows announce to us, as with a trumpet's voice, that this was at once the crisis of Peter's life and of the Christian faith: "Thou hast told me what I am, and I will tell thee what thou art." In that confession were wrapt up the truths which were to be the light of the future ages of Christendom; on him who had uttered it devolved at once the awful privilege of passing from the Jew into the Christian, from the prophet to the apostle, from Simon the son of Jona into Peter the rock.

Gradually, too, and doubtfully, and with many a wild and wayward impulse, did the enthusiasm of Peter kindle not merely

into admiration for the divine Teacher, but love for the divine Friend. That central fire which was the life of the whole career of every one of the apostles, so far as they were apostles at all, in him existed, not more deeply and truly, it may be, but more visibly, as the one absorbing element into which his natural enthusiasm resolved itself. Amidst all the impetuous sallies of zeal—amidst all the weaknesses consequent on his presumption and vehemence—whether when he drew the sword in the garden, or gave way to the panic of the moment in the house of Caiaphas —this was still the sustaining, purifying, restoring principle: "He needed not save to wash his feet, and was clean every whit."

Whatever else might be the feelings with which he looked upon our Lord—with whatever grounds the early Church may have traced to his hand the representation of the Prophet and Lawgiver which is preserved to us in the Gospel of St. Matthew —it may have been a true feeling which ascribed to his more personal and direct teaching that second Gospel which, though in substance the same, is yet so remarkably contrasted with it in the minuteness and liveliness with which it records the outward actions, the look and manner, the very Syriac words which fell from Him who there appears not merely as the Fulfiller of the ancient covenant, but in the closer and more personal relation of the human Protector and Friend—a Friend not only in boundless power and goodness, but in all human sympathy and tenderness. "He loved St. John exceedingly," says Chrysostom; "but it was by Peter that he was exceedingly beloved."

And now let us carry our thoughts a few years forward and place ourselves in that early period of the Christian Church of which our only historical record is to be found in the first twelve chapters of the Acts. It is indeed a scene only known to us dimly and partially; the chronology, the details of life, the characters and fortunes of the several apostles, are wrapt in almost impenetrable darkness. One colossal figure, however, emerges

from the gloom, now more than ever the representative of his brethren, though from twelve they have grown to many thousands—though from the little flock of the first apostles they have grown into a vast society, striking its roots far and wide wherever the Jewish race extends. Can we doubt that this was the time when those promises to Peter recurred to the minds of the disciples with all the force of prophecies which had received their full accomplishment? Can we doubt that when they saw him stand forth in the front of the whole body of the believers, in their first days of bereavement, for the election of a new apostle, in their first hour of exultation on the day of Pentecost, in the first brunt of persecution from the Jewish Sanhedrim, Peter was to them indeed the rock and shepherd of the Church? Can we doubt that when they witnessed the thousands upon thousands of his converts, they felt that it was the rolling back of the everlasting doors by him who had the keys of the kingdom of heaven? —that when the magic arts of Simon quailed before him, when the four quaternions of Herod's soldiers were unable to detain him in the guarded fortress, they felt that the embattled powers of evil were driven back before that power against which the gates of hell should not prevail? Can we doubt that when they saw the crowds rushing into the city and laying their sick along the streets if so be that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them—the awful judgment upon falsehood in the death of Ananias—the divine sanction of beneficence in the resurrection of Dorcas—they felt that what Peter had bound on earth was indeed bound in heaven, that what Peter had loosed on earth was indeed loosed in heaven? But as before, so now, there was yet a higher mission to discharge than to stand at the head of his brethren. He had been the first to recognize the manifestation of the Son, he was now to be the first to receive the manifestation of the Spirit. It is true that as before he had been the fervent Galilean, so now he was the apostle of the circumcision. Still, in those appeals which swayed the hearts of thou-

sands in the streets of Jerusalem, he takes his stand on David's tomb—he welcomes the newest and latest of God's dispensations in the language of the oldest of the prophets. Still, he and his brother apostles are to be found entering the Beautiful Gate of the temple to join in its sacred services; still, at the close of day, they may be seen lingering on its eastern height in that ancient cloister which bore the name of Solomon. The worship of the temple and the synagogue still went on side by side with the prayers and the breaking of bread from house to house; the Jewish family life was the highest expression of Christian unity, whether in the household of the great apostle himself, when Abraham and Sarah were still the types of Christian marriage, or in that sacred circle of the brethren of our Lord, in whom, with their wives and children, the apostolic age may have loved to trace the continued sanction of those domestic relations by which they were bound to our Lord himself. The fulfillment of the ancient law was the aspect of Christianity to which the attention of the Church was most directed, whether as set forth in the divine code of Christian duty contained in the earliest and most purely Jewish of the Gospels—that according to St. Matthew—or in the earliest and most purely Jewish of the Epistles—the Epistle of James the Just, now beginning to take his place in the divine economy as the type of all that strictly belonged to the primitive, original Israelite Christian.

But was Christianity to be no more than a perfected Judaism? Was Peter to be no more than the founder of the Jerusalem Church? Was this to be the final end of those lofty aspirations of the ancient prophets—the adequate fulfillment of those parting words of his ascended Lord? Was the existing framework of the Christian society, which, however widely ramified, was still confined to the Hebrew race and those Hebrew institutions that bore on their very front the marks of approaching dissolution—was this the Church against which the gates of death were never to prevail? Were all those generations of the ancient world who

had lived before the law—all those countless hundreds of Gentile proselytes who even now were knocking for admittance at the gates of life—were all these, with all the heathen nations at their rear, to be for ever excluded from the kingdom of heaven? Such were the questionings which must have arisen in the mind of the great apostle when, on the roof at Jaffa, overlooking the waves of the western sea—the sea of Greece and Rome—the sea of the isles of the Gentiles—he knelt in trance and prayer waiting for the answer to his thoughts. No; it could not be. No; although he himself shall pass away before a new apostle, greater even than himself—though the first shall be last and the last first—though he has borne the scorching blast of the rising sun, and the other has been called but at the eleventh hour,—though all this takes place, it must not be. What God hath cleansed, that Peter must not call common or unclean; already the messengers of the Roman centurion are in the court below; once more he is to wield the keys of life and death—once more to loose the Christian Church for ever from that yoke which neither he nor his fathers had been able to bear—once more, wider far than ever mortal hand had up to that moment dared, to throw open the gates of heaven even to the whole human race; and then his work—his own especial work, as the first apostle and the founder of the Church—was ended.

Without Peter, humanly speaking, the infant Church must have perished in its cradle; he it was who, under God's blessing, caught the truth which was to be the polar star of its future history—who guided it safely through the dangers of its first existence—who then, when the time came for launching it into a wider ocean, preserved it no less by his retirement from the helm which was destined for another hand. He was the rock, not the builder, of the Christian society—the guardian of its gates, not the master of its innermost recesses—the founder, not the propagator nor the finisher—the Moses of its exodus, not the David of its triumph nor the Daniel of its latter days.

And with him, by the very force of the terms, the purely personal and historical part of our Lord's promise of necessity came to an end. Never again can Jewish zeal and Jewish forms so come into contact with the first beginnings of Christian faith—never again can mortal man find himself so standing on the junction of two dispensations; the Church once founded can have no second rock; the gates once opened can never again be closed; the sins which were then condemned, the virtues which were then blessed, the liberty which was then allowed, the license which was then forbidden, whether by word or deed of the first apostle, were once for all bound or loosed in the courts of heaven, never again to be unbound or bound by any earthly power whatever.

But there is a sense, and that of great practical importance, in which the example of Peter, like that of the other apostles, lives and will live always. We know the feeling of suspicion, of contempt, of compassion with which the world regards those laborers in a good cause who, whether in praise or blame, are called enthusiasts. We know how often this feeling is provoked or even deserved by the imperfections, the narrowness, the one-sided views with which such characters are often marked, and how strong is the temptation to regard them, if not as absolutely mischievous, at least as useless or despicable. It is as a warning against such a feeling as this that the blessing on Peter becomes the expression of a universal law of the providence of God. Most signally indeed was it shown in the character of the first apostle that it was by no intellectual greatness or strength of mind that Christianity was first communicated to man. Most remarkable is the proof afforded of the divine origin of our faith, when we contemplate the fact that he who was undoubtedly its first human founder cannot, by the wildest license of conjecture, be imagined capable of conceiving or inventing it. Grant that Peter was the chief of the first apostles, and it follows almost of necessity that the apostles were, as they professed to be, the dis-

ciples of no less than the Son of God. What is true, however, of Christianity in its first rise, is true also, in a measure, of all its subsequent exemplifications. Look at the history of any great movement for good in the world, and ask who took the first critical step in advance—who it was that the wavering and undecided crowd chose to rally round as their leader and their champion—and will not the answer always be as it was in the apostolical age—not the man of wide and comprehensive thought nor of deep and fervent love, but the characters of simple, unhesitating zeal which act instead of reflecting, which venture instead of calculating, which cannot or will not see the difficulties with which the first struggle of an untried reformation is of necessity accompanied? They may be doomed, like Peter, to retire before the advancing tread of a new apostle, but it is not till their task is finished; they may perish, but their cause survives; they have been the pioneers in the great work which they themselves but faintly and partially understood. And of such, whether in nations or individuals, the well-known comment of Origen, echoed as it is with more or less distinctness by so many illustrious voices, from Tertullian down to Leo, is no exaggeration of the truth—"He who has Peter's faith is the Church's rock; he who has Peter's virtues has Peter's keys."



# XL.

## JOHN.

THE life of John, at first sight, seems shrouded in an atmosphere of religious awe which we cannot penetrate; in him the earthly seems so completely absorbed into the heavenly—the character, the thoughts, the language of the disciple so lost in that of the Master—that we tremble to draw aside the veil from that divine friendship; we fear to mix any human motives with a life which seems so especially the work of the Spirit of God.

It was not by fluctuating and irregular impulses like Peter, nor yet by a sudden and abrupt conversion like Paul, that John received his education for the apostleship; there was no sphere of outward activity as in Peter, no vehement struggle as in Paul; in action, while Peter speaks, moves, directs, he follows, silent and retired. It would almost seem as if in John the still contemplation, the intuitive insight into heavenly things, which form the basis of his character, had been deepened and solemnized by something of that more Eastern and primitive feeling to which the records of the Jewish nation lead us back—something of that more simple, universal, childlike spirit which brooded over the cradle of the human race—which entitled the Mesopotamian patriarch, rather than the Hebrew Lawgiver or the Jewish king, to be called "the friend of God"—which fitted the prophet of the Chaldean captivity, rather than the native seers of Samaria or Jerusalem, to be the "man greatly beloved."

The whole sum of John's character must of necessity be con-



*John the Evangelist*

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tained in the one single fact that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Once understand that, from whatever causes, no obstacle intervened between him and that one divine object which, from the earliest dawn of youth to the last years of extreme old age, was ever impressing itself deeper and deeper into his inmost soul, and his whole work on earth is at once accounted for. Whatever we can conceive of devoted tenderness, of deep affection, of intense admiration for goodness, we must conceive of him who, even in the palace of the high priest and at the foot of the cross, was the inseparable companion of his Lord; whatever we can conceive of a gentleness and holiness ever increasing in depth and purity, that we must conceive of the heart and mind which produced the Gospel and the Epistles of St. John.

One phase, however, of his character there was which might at first sight seem inconsistent with what has just been said, but which nevertheless was the aspect of it most familiar to the minds of the earliest Church. It was not as John the beloved disciple, but as John the son of thunder—not as the apostle who leaned on his Master's breast at supper, but as the apostle who called down fire from heaven, who forbade the man to cast out devils, who claimed with his brother the highest places in the kingdom of heaven—that he was known to the readers of the first three Gospels. But, in fact, it is in accordance with what has been said that in such a character the more outward and superficial traits should have attracted attention before the complete perfection of that more inward and silent growth which was alone essential to it; and, alien in some respects as the bursts of fiery passion may be from the usual tenor of St. John's later character, they fully agree with the severity, almost unparalleled in the New Testament, which marks the well-known anathema in his Second Epistle, and the story, which there seems no reason to doubt, of Cerinthus and the bath. It is not surprising that the deep stillness of such a character as this should, like the Oriental sky, break out from time to time into tempests of im-

passioned vehemence; still less that the character which was to excel all others in its devoted love of good should give indications—in its earliest stages even in excess—of that intense hatred of evil without which love of good can hardly be said to exist.

It was not till the removal of the first and the second apostle from the scene of their earthly labors that there burst upon the whole civilized world that awful train of calamities which, breaking as it did on Italy, on Asia Minor and on Palestine almost simultaneously, though under the most different forms, was regarded alike by Roman, Christian and Jew as the manifestation of the visible judgment of God. It was now—if we may trust the testimony alike of internal and external proof—in the interval between the death of Nero and the fall of Jerusalem, when the roll of apostolical epistles seemed to have been finally closed, when every other inspired tongue had been hushed in the grave, that there rose from the lonely rock of Patmos that solemn voice which mingled with the storm that raged around it as the dirge of an expiring world; that under the "red and lowering sky" which had at last made itself understood to the sense of the dullest, there rose that awful vision of coming destiny which has received the expressive name of the Revelation of St. John the Divine.

As it is love that pervades our whole conception of the teaching of St. John, so also it pervades our whole conception of his character. We see him—it surely is no unwarranted fancy—we see him declining with the declining century, every sense and faculty waxing feebler, but that one divinest faculty of all burning more and more brightly; we see it breathing through every look and gesture—the one animating principle of the atmosphere in which he lives and moves—earth and heaven, the past, the present and the future alike echoing to him the dying strain of his latest words: "We love him because he loved us." And when at last he disappears from our view in the last pages of the sacred volume, ecclesiastical tradition still lingers in the close;

and in that touching story, not the less impressive because so familiar to us, we see the aged apostle borne in the arms of his disciples into the Ephesian assembly, and there repeating over and over again the same saying, "Little children, love one another," till, when asked why he said this and nothing else, he replied, in those well-known words, fit indeed to be the farewell speech of the beloved disciple: "Because this is our Lord's command, and if you fulfill this, nothing else is needed."

Such was the life of St. John—the sunset, as I venture to call it, of the apostolical age—not amidst the storms which lowered around the apocalyptic seer, but the exact image of those milder lights and shades which we know so well even in our own native mountains, every object far and near brought out in its due proportions, the harsher features now softly veiled in the descending shadows, and the distant heights lit up with a far more than morning or mid-day glory in the expiring glow of the evening heavens.

# XLI.

## JAMES.

THE character of James is only to be read in his Epistle, for all traditionary notices of his history and habits seem uncertain. We know little of him, except that he was not the James who stood with Jesus on the mount; that he was known as James the Less; and that many identify him with James the Lord's brother, of whom Paul speaks. At the council of Jerusalem he acted, in some measure, as moderator, and his letter as well as his speech shows him to have possessed qualities admirably adapting him for this office —wisdom, calmness, common sense, avoidance of extremes, a balanced intellect and a determined will.

The Epistle of James is the first and best homily extant. It is not what many would now call a "gospel sermon," but neither is the Sermon on the Mount. It has little doctrinal statement and no consecutive argument; it is a list of moral duties, inspirited by the earnestness with which they are urged, and beautified by the graphic and striking imagery in which the style is clothed. James is one of the most sententious, pointed and terse of the New Testament authors. He reads like a modern. The edges of his sentences sparkle. His words are as "goads, and as nails." He reminds us more of Ecclesiastes than of any other Scripture book. Paul's short sentences never occur till the close of his Epistles, and remind us then of hurried pantings of the heart; they are like the postscripts of lovers. James' entire

Epistle is composed of brief, glancing sentences, discovering the extreme liveliness and piercing directness of his intellect. Every word tells. How sharp and effective are such expressions as—"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." "Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well; the devils also believe, and tremble." "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms"!

In one of those sentences—"the devils believe, and tremble"—as well as in his quaint and powerful picture of the tongue, we find that very rare and somewhat fearful gift of irony winding and darkening into invective. What cool scorn and warm horror meet in the words, "*believe*, and *tremble*"! How formidable does the "little member" he describes become when it is tipped with the "fire of hell"! And in what slow, successive, thunderous words does he describe the "wisdom which is not from above" as "earthly, sensual, devilish"! And upon the selfish rich he pours out a very torrent of burning gold, as if from the Lord of Sabaoth himself, into whose ears the cries of the reapers have entered.

In fine, although we pronounce James rather an orator than a poet, yet there do occur some touches of genuine poetic beauty, of which, in pursuing his swift rhetorical way, he is himself hardly conscious. "Let the rich," he says, "rejoice in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away." For a moment he follows its brief history: "The sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways"—"fade away" and yet "rejoice," inasmuch as, like the flower, whose bloom, savor and pith have floated up to swell the broad-blown lily of day, his adversity withers in the prosperity of God.

"What is life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." These flowers, indeed, are transplanted from the prophetic forests. There, under the proud cedars, they were overshadowed and almost lost; here they bloom alone, and are the more lovely that they seem to grow amid the fragments of the tables which Moses, in his ire, strewed along the sides of Sinai.

A little common sense often goes a great way in a mystified and hollow world. How much mist does one sunbeam disperse! James' few sentences—the law in powder—thrown out with decision, pointed by keen satire and touched with terrific anger, have prevailed to destroy and disperse a thousand Antinomian delusions, and to redeem the "perfect law of liberty" from manifold charges of licentiousness. Even grant we that, among the unhallowed multitude who have sought to reduce the standard of morals, Luther, like another Aaron, may have mingled, even he must down before the "man with a word and a blow," the man Moses, impersonated by James, crying out—as his face's indignant crimson flashes through the glory which the divine presence had left upon it, and his eye outbeams his face and outruns his hurrying feet, and his arms make a heave-offering of the fire-written tables—"Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

Earnestness is a quality as old as the heart of man. Nor is the proclamation of it, as an essential and all-important element, merely of yesterday. It was preached—nay, cursed—into Israel's ears by Deborah, when she spoke so bitterly of poor, trimming, tarrying, neutral Meroz, "which came not forth to the help of the Lord." It was asked, in thunder, from Carmel, by Elijah, as he said, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" It was proclaimed, through a calm louder than the thunder, by the great Teacher himself, as he told the docile, well-behaved, money-loving weakling in the Gospel, and in him millions, "Go, sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross, and follow

me." And here, when faith in the cross itself was retiring to rest in the upper rooms of speculative acquiescence or traditionary acceptance, comes James stoutly resisting the retreat. His great demand is "life, action, fruit." Roughly, as one awakens those who are sleeping amid flames, does he shake the slumberers and alarm the supine. But let those who have been taught by more modern prophets the value of earnestness remember that James always admits the authority of that faith whence he would expect virtue to spring. "Faith is dead, being alone;" in other words, it is not the Christian faith at all. *That* is necessarily a living, fruit-bearing principle. And, strong as his hand is to tear away the subterfuges of the hypocrite, and bold as his spirit is to denounce every shade of inconsistency—every "sham" of that day —and although his tone against oppression and oppressors crashes up into that of the old prophets, and his fourth and fifth chapters are in the very mood of Malachi, yet the whole tenor of his doctrine and spirit and language substantiates his first and only title —"James, a servant of God and *of the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

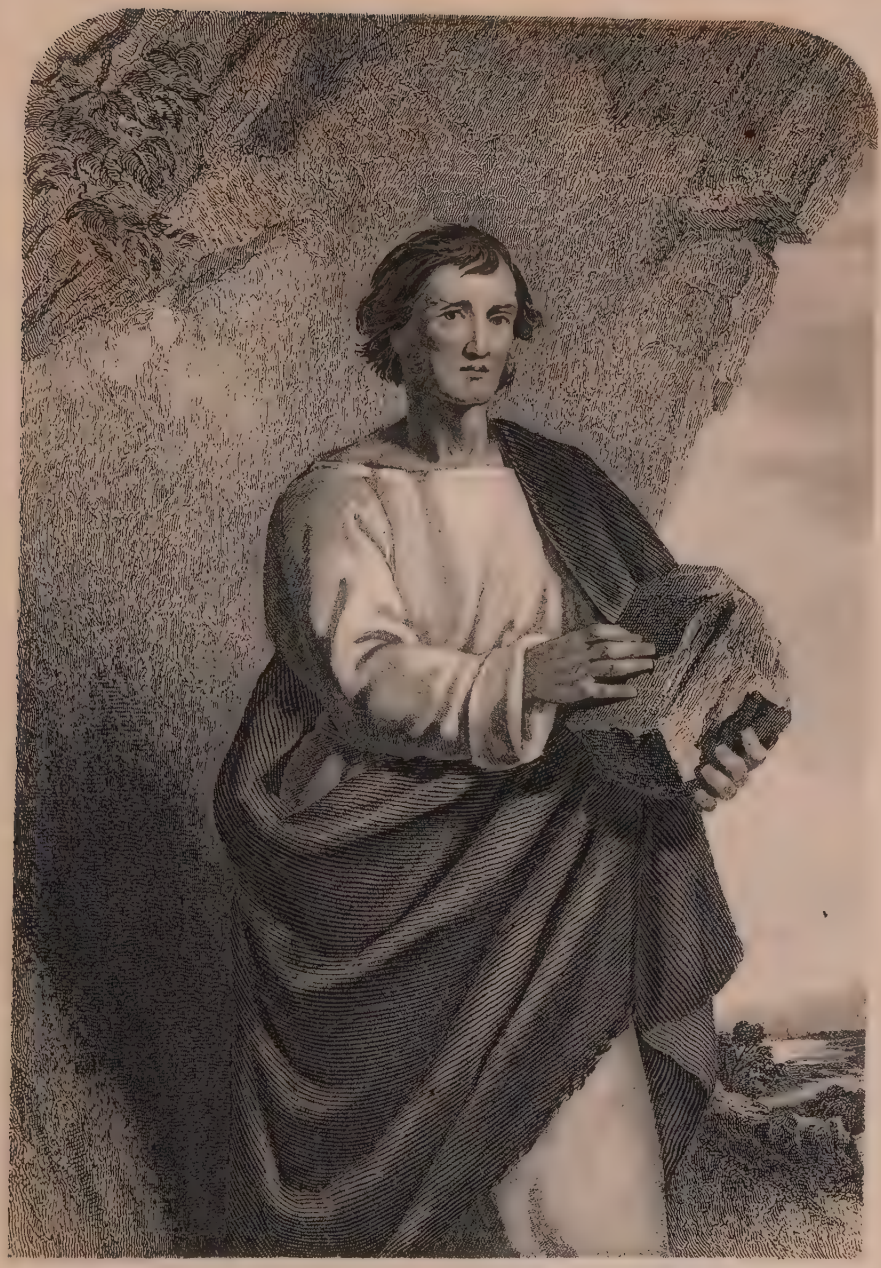
# XLII.

## STEPHEN.

A MAN full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." How few such men have there been in the world! Even in the early days of the Christian Church, when the lamp of true religion burnt strong and bright, it was rare to meet with persons of this stamp.

This, however, was Stephen's character. He was naturally like other men. He was born in sin and shapen in iniquity—a corrupt and fallen creature like his brethren. But grace made him what he was. Grace renewed his heart and changed him into a true believer. He was "full of faith." It is said of some Christians that "they believed." We cannot even believe in Christ unless God takes away our natural unbelief and gives us faith. All true faith, even the feeblest, is his gift. It is by his grace alone that we see our need of a Saviour, and feel a desire to flee to him for salvation. But of Stephen it was written that he was "*full* of faith." He made a large demand on God, and it was fully answered. He opened his mouth wide, and it was filled. His faith was strong and unwavering. He walked "as seeing Him who is invisible." He "knew whom he believed." He lived a life of unclouded faith and hope.

And why is it not so with us? Why is our faith so weak? Why are not our hearts full of Christ? Because we do not open them to him. We do not say unreservedly, "Come, Lord, and dwell within me: take full possession of my heart." We keep



*Stephen*

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little sins there, and these thrust out the Saviour. We reserve a little corner for the world, and Jesus is not heartily welcomed. We are candidates for heaven, but we want to take the world with us there. Now, go and pray that God would empty your heart of all else, and *fill* you with faith.

He was "full of the Holy Ghost." He did not merely look up to the Holy Spirit now and then as his Teacher, but the Holy Ghost was his daily and hourly Guide and Comforter. The Holy Ghost dwelt within him as an ever-present Friend. He walked in the Spirit all the day long. Here is the secret of a really heavenly life. Whether we are ministers or private Christians, here is the secret of our Christian walk. And this need not merely be the portion of a few: it *may* be the portion of us all. For does not the apostle say, "Be *filled* with the Spirit"? If he dwells within us, then shall we rise higher and higher in our heavenward course.

But let us examine a little into Stephen's history. Let us see if the fruits of holiness appeared in his life. He was specially selected by the apostles as one of the seven deacons. These deacons were an order of men set apart as helpers to the apostles. Their office was to manage the money matters of the Church, and also to assist the apostles in the work of their ministry, and for this purpose they were careful to choose men of a godly character and of blameless lives. No sooner was Stephen appointed to this important office than he began to labor zealously for Christ. We find him disputing with the Jews, earnestly endeavoring to bring his beloved countrymen over to the Christian faith. This was a hard task, for the Jews clung stubbornly to their old ways. The new doctrine of Christ crucified and salvation through him was altogether distasteful to them. But Stephen persevered. His was a work of faith and a labor of love, and he longed to bring them out of their darkness into a better and a purer light. And success in many cases crowned his efforts.

But from this moment Stephen became a marked man—

marked by God as his faithful servant, marked by the apostles as a true brother and fellow-workman, and marked by the unbelieving Jews as a troubler of Israel. And all the more furious did they become, since "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake." At length, after various attempts to put him down, they stirred up the people, seized him, dragged him before the council and brought against him false witnesses who accused him of having spoken blasphemy. Stephen was now in the power of his enemies, and what could he do against so violent a rabble? There was, however, something so heavenly about his manner that his very judges were all struck by it, and as they looked upon him they felt as if they were looking upon the face of an angel.

How remarkable is the power and influence of real godliness! When you have been in the company of a holy person, have you not sometimes been quite awed, as it were, by it? Has it not humbled you and made you feel painfully conscious of your own unworthiness? Has it not shown you that religion is a real thing? Is there not something about an earnest servant of God which even the most careless person cannot but observe? How, then, will it be when Jesus himself stands before you in his glory? Will not many then exclaim, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"?

Stephen makes a long defence before the council. For a while they listen to him. But when at length he upbraids them for resisting the Holy Ghost, and reminds them that they had murdered Him who came to save them, they could no longer restrain themselves. His words cut them to the heart, and they fairly gnashed their teeth with rage. Meanwhile, Stephen is unmoved. He is calm in the midst of the uproar; and being full of the Holy Ghost, he lifts his eyes upward to heaven, from whence came his strength and comfort. In a remarkable manner he received the support he so much needed. He is permitted to behold for a moment the very glory of God. He sees before

him that almighty Saviour who has promised to be with his people, and who *is* with us though we see him not, and with us more especially in the hour of our need. And now they rush upon him with the fury of so many wild beasts. They hurry him out of the city, for they dare not murder him in Jerusalem; and having done this, they stone him to death.

Such was the end of this faithful and fearless martyr. He was the first who suffered for Christ's sake—the first who gave his life for the faith of the gospel. What an amazing contrast have we here between the peaceful calmness of Stephen and the headstrong fury of his murderers! Think of those men, full of anger, giving way to their evil passions, altogether unchecked by the fear of God, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against their unoffending brother. Truly did the wise man say, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." May the Lord keep us from the madness of our own wicked hearts! May he restrain our passions and govern our wills! Oh that he may never leave us to our own evil selves!

And now think of this Christian sufferer. How fearful his end, and yet how glorious! With what cruelty and violence is he treated, and yet how peacefully does he meet death! Whilst his enemies rage, he calmly commends himself to his Saviour, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Whilst they were lifting up their savage hands against him, he pleads for them as his Master did before him: "Lay not this sin to their charge," and then he "fell asleep." His earthly trials were then all over, and he passed into the peaceful presence of his Lord.

# XLIII.

## PAUL.

HAD Paul not become a Christian, he might, no doubt, have been the head of the Pharisaic faction in the last expiring struggles of his nation; he might have rallied round him the nobler spirits of his countrymen, and by his courage and prudence have caused Jerusalem to hold out a few months or years more against the army of Titus. Still, at best, he would have been a Maccabæus or a Gamaliel; and what a difference to the whole subsequent fortunes of the world between a Maccabæus and a Paul, between the Jewish rabbi and the apostle of the Gentiles! It was not till the scales fell off from his eyes after the three days' stupor—till the consciousness of his great mission awakened all his dormant energies—that we really see what he was. That divine Providence which, as he himself tells us (Gal. i. 15), had "already separated him from his mother's womb," had no doubt overruled the circumstances of his earlier education for the great end to which he was afterward called; in him, as in similar cases, the natural faculties were, by his conversion, "not unclothed, but clothed upon;" the glory of divine grace was shown here, as always, not by repressing and weakening the human character, but by bringing it out for the first time in its full vigor. He was still a Jew; the zeal of his ancestral tribe, which had caused him "to raven as a wolf in the morning" of his life, still glowed in his veins when he "returned in the evening to divide the spoil" of the mightier



*Paul.*

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enemy whom he had defeated and bound; and in the unwearied energy and self-devotion, no less than the peculiar intensity of national feeling, which mark his whole life and writings, we discern the qualities which the Jewish people alone, of all the nations then existing on the earth, could have furnished. But there were other elements which his conversion developed into life besides the mere enthusiasm of the Jew, shared equally with him by Peter. I would not lay stress on the Grecian culture which he might have received in the schools of Tarsus, or the philosophical tone which we know to have characterized the lectures of Gamaliel, though doubtless these had their share in the formation of his subsequent character. But whatever had been in former ages that remarkable union of qualities which had from the earliest times constituted the chosen people into a link between the East and the West, that was now in the highest degree exemplified in the character of Paul. Never before or since have the Jew and Gentile so completely met in one single person by an absolute though unconscious fusion of the two together—not founding a new system, but breathing a new spirit into that which already existed, and which only needed some such divine impulse to call it into that fullness of life which had been stunted only, not destroyed. He knew nothing, it may be, of those philosophers and historians with whom we are so familiar, nor can we expect to find in him the peculiar graces of Athenian genius; yet it is in the dialectical skill of Aristotle, the impassioned appeals of Demosthenes, the complicated sentences of Thucydides, far more than in the language of Moses or Solomon or Isaiah, that the form and structure of his arguments finds its natural parallel. He had never studied, it may be, or, if he had, would hardly have discerned, those finer feelings of humanity of which the germs existed in Greece and Rome; but how remarkably are they exemplified in his own character! What is that probing of the innermost recesses of the human heart and conscience—so unlike the theocratic visions of the older prophets—

but the apostolical reflexion of the practical, individual, psychological spirit of the Western philosophers? What is that capacity for throwing himself into the position and feeling of others—that becoming "all things to all men" which his enemies called worldly prudence—that intense sympathy in the strength of which he "had a thousand friends, and loved each as his own soul, and seemed to live a thousand lives in them, and died a thousand deaths when he must quit them"—which "suffered when the weaker brother suffered"—which would not allow him to eat meat "whilst the world standeth, lest he make his brother to offend,"—what was all this but the effect of God's blessing on that boundless versatility of nature which had formed the especial mark of the Grecian mind for good and evil in all ages? What was it but the significant maxim of the Roman poet—"*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*"[1]—transfigured for the first time in the heavenly radiance of truth and holiness?

It will not be supposed that in this brief view of the outward aspect of Paul's character I have attempted to give a complete analysis of it. I have purposely confined myself to those natural and moral gifts which, as they were practically called into existence by and for the work which he was to perform, can only through and in that work be fully understood. There is perhaps no feature of the apostolical age which is more difficult for us to comprehend than the immense importance attached by Paul to so obvious a truth as the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian Church, still more the furious opposition by which its first announcement was met. Yet so it was. Other questions occupied the attention of the first dawn and of the final close of the apostolical age; but the one question above all others which absorbed its mid-day prime—which is the key to almost all the Epistles—which is the one subject of almost the whole history of the Acts—was not the foundation, not the completion, of the Christian Church, but its universal diffusion—the destruction,

[1] "I am a man, and consider nothing human as foreign to me."

not of paganism, not of gnosticism, but of Judaism. He, therefore, who stood at this juncture as the champion of this new truth at once drew the whole attention of the Christian world to himself: every other apostle recedes from our view; east and west, north and south, from Jerusalem to Rome, from Macedonia to Melita, we hear of nothing, we see nothing, but Paul and his opponents.

It is only by bearing this steadily in mind that we can rightly conceive the nature of the conflict. He was not like a missionary of later times whose great work is accomplished if he can add to the number of his converts; he was this, but he was much more than this: it was not the actual conversions themselves, but the principle which every conversion involved—not the actual disciples whom he gained, but he himself who dared to make them disciples—that constitutes the enduring interest of that life-long struggle. It was not merely that he reclaimed from paganism the Grecian cities of Asia Minor, but that at every step which he took westward from Palestine he tore up the prejudices of ages. It was not merely that he cast out the false spirit from the damsel at Philippi, but that when he set his foot on the farther shores of the Ægean Sea, religion for the first time ceased to be Asiatic and became European. It was not merely that at Athens he converted Dionysius and Damaris, but that there was seen a Jew standing in the court of the Areopagus and appealing to an Athenian audience, as children of the same Father, as worshipers, though unconsciously, of the same God. It was not that at Rome he made some impression more or less permanent on the slaves of the imperial palace, but that a descendant of Abraham recognized in the dense masses of that corrupt metropolis a field for his exertions as sacred as in the courts of the temple of Jerusalem. It was not the Roman governor or the Ephesian mob, but the vast body of Judaizing Christians, which was his real enemy—not the worshipers of Jupiter and Diana, but those who made their boast of Moses and claimed to be the disciples of

Cephas. The conflict with paganism was indeed the occasion of those few invaluable models of missionary preaching which are preserved to us in his speeches; but it is the conflict with Judaism which forms the one continuous subject of that far more elaborate and enduring record of his teaching which is preserved to us in his Epistles. At every step of his progress he is dogged by his implacable adversaries, and at every step, as he turns to resist them, he flings back those words of entreaty, of rebuke, of warning, which have become the treasures of the Christian Church for ever. They deny his authority, they impugn his motives, they raise the watchword of the law and of circumcision, and the result is to be found in the early Epistles to Corinth, to Galatia and to Rome. They harass him in his imprisonment at Rome, they blend their Jewish notions with the wilder theories of Oriental philosophy, and there rises before him, in the Epistles to Ephesus, Colosse and Philippi, the majestic vision of the spiritual temple which is to grow out of the ruins of the old—of that divine Head of the whole race of man before whom all temporary and transient rites, all lower forms of worship and philosophy, fade away, in whom, in the fullness of times, all things were gathered together in one. They rise once more in the Asiatic Churches; all Asia is turned away from him; he stands almost alone under the shadow of impending death. But it is the last effort of a defeated and desperate cause. The victory is already gained, and in the three Epistles to Titus and Timothy we may consent to recognize the last accents of the aged apostle, now conscious that his contest is over; some forebodings, indeed, we catch in them of that dark storm which was about to sweep, within the next few years, over the Christian and Jewish world alike; but their general tone is one of calm repose—the mid-day heat is passed away, the shades of evening are beginning to slope, the gleam of a brighter sky is seen beyond, and with the assured conviction that the object of his life was fully accomplished, he might well utter the words,

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

To this estimate of Paul's character and position as the great apostle of the Gentiles may be added a brief account of the most striking events of his life. Paul was born at Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, and his father had obtained the privileges of a Roman citizen. But his family was of the purest Hebrew stock, uncontaminated by the admixture of Gentile blood, and its name still stood on the public genealogies of Benjamin. The education of Paul was completed at Jerusalem, under Gamaliel. He seems to have greatly outstripped his master in zeal and fiery ardor against the Christians. Not content with carrying on his crusade in and near Jerusalem, he obtained letters from the Sanhedrim, giving him authority to drag to Jerusalem from Damascus any converts to the new heresy on whom he could lay hands.

The distance from Jerusalem is at last traversed; Saul and his companions have feasted their eyes on the white buildings of Damascus and their groves of green—the pearl gleaming in its emerald setting. They have advanced far along the shady avenues of the celebrated groves and gardens, screened by the cool branches from the fierce mid-day heat. Suddenly a great light shines from heaven, above the brightness of the sun. A voice speaks to Saul in the Hebrew tongue; only two short sentences are uttered, but they come home to him with such divine power that in a far more profound sense than the words were used of his namesake, the first king of Israel, he is changed into "another man." The persecutor rises from the ground an apostle, and his whole energies are now consecrated to promote the cause which once he destroyed.

After his baptism by Ananias, Paul preached for a short time in Damascus, then retired for a season into Arabia, returned again to Damascus, and being persecuted by the Jews, found it necessary to make his escape from the city by night, being let down in a basket from the wall. Retracing his steps, he goes

back to Jerusalem, where he is received by the Christians with coldness and suspicion; but the generous-minded Barnabas having warmly espoused his cause, he at last receives the right hand of fellowship from the brethren. He preaches Christ in the synagogues, but soon a conspiracy is formed against him. In a vision he is instructed by Christ to leave Jerusalem and count the Gentile world his sphere of labor. Accordingly, he quitted the capital of Judaism after but a fortnight's stay, and leaving Palestine by Cæsarea, went to Tarsus, where he remained for a time in obscurity.

Meanwhile other events were going on in Palestine, designed to show more clearly how the Gentiles were to be welcomed into the Christian Church. Peter had his vision at Joppa, and paid his visit to Cæsarea, where he baptized Cornelius, a Roman officer, and his Gentile friends. Word came to the apostles, at Jerusalem, of the conversion of Gentiles in places so remote as Phœnicia, Cyprus and Antioch, and Barnabas, a man in whom fatherly kindness and a sound Christian judgment were finely blended, was sent to Antioch to guide and confirm the converts. Retaining his friendly interest in Paul, and thinking him a suitable co-worker, he went to Tarsus for him and brought him to Antioch. For a year the two evangelists labored in that city, and it seems to have been at this time that the new and glorious name of CHRISTIANS was first given to the converts.

When these evangelistic labors were begun at Antioch, it was a great and wicked city. Luxurious Romans were attracted by its beautiful climate, but for the most part its population was a worthless rabble of Greeks and Orientals. The frivolous amusements of the theatre were the occupation of their life. It is probable that no populations have ever been more abandoned than those of Oriental Greek cities under the Roman empire, and of these cities Antioch was the greatest and the worst. If we wish to realize the appearance of the complicated heathenism of the first Christian century, we must endeavor to imagine the

scene of that suburb—the famous Daphne with its fountains and groves of bay trees, its bright buildings, its crowds of licentious votaries, its statue of Apollo, where, under the climate of Syria and the wealthy patronage of Rome, all that was beautiful in nature and in art had created a sanctuary for a perpetual festival of vice.

After laboring some time at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were called by the Lord to missionary work in other districts, and solemnly set apart by the Church for this purpose. At Paphos the Roman governor became a convert. A Jewish sorcerer named Bar-jesus, or, in Greek, Elymas, made a vehement effort to withstand the apostles and prevent the conversion of the governor. The trade of sorcery was exceedingly common in those times, and the lower classes of Jews, both men and women, were much addicted to it. They ministered to that eager desire to know the secrets of the future which is common to man, which was especially active in this age of general excitement and expectation, and which, now that the great heathen oracles were silent, had scarcely any other outlet. The fame of the Hebrew prophets gave Jews a preference in the practice of this art, as it would generally be believed that they knew most of the future. The contest with this sorcerer was Paul's first great battle. Full of faith and power, he rebuked his countryman in language of stunning intensity, and brought temporary blindness upon him. The effect on the mind of the governor was favorable—he became a firm believer.

After visiting various places, the apostles came to Lystra, where the miraculous cure of a lame man caused them to be mistaken for Jupiter and Mercury. The fickle multitude, who at first proposed to worship them, being stirred up by Jews who followed them from other towns, ended by stoning them, and Paul was so hurt that he was left for dead. Among those who may have gazed on his seemingly lifeless face was a young Greek who had listened to his words with no common emotion.

Timothy, his own son in the faith, seems now to have heard the gospel for the first time. Well instructed in the Scriptures though he was by his Jewish mother and grandmother, probably till now he had never obtained the key to their meaning. After Paul's visit, the reading of the Scriptures would be prosecuted with fresh zest in that sweet domestic circle, and the young Greek would become familiar with the great "mystery of godliness" which his life was to be spent in proclaiming.

Paul and Barnabas, having returned to Antioch, were sent from there to Jerusalem, to obtain from the mother Church a deliverance on the subject of circumcision. The apostles and elders came together, and Peter made a strong address, urging that they should not put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. Then Paul and Barnabas declared what God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. After an address by James, a letter was written instructing the Gentile Christians that it was not necessary for them to be circumcised and keep the Jewish law, but recommending them to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from the lascivious feasts connected with idol-worship. Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas were sent to Antioch to make the same communication orally. The deliverance was very satisfactory to the Gentile Church, and occasioned much rejoicing.

From a statement of Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, it would seem to have been about this time that Peter paid a visit to Antioch, and the two great apostles came into collision. Paul says that he "withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed;" that "the other Jews dissembled with him;" and that "Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." It is pleasing to notice that after this hot, angry strife, Peter's generous nature—impulsive, yet rich in love—leads him to write very tenderly of his "beloved brother Paul." 2 Pet. iii. 15.

An ingenious writer gives us a description of the personal ap-

pearance of these two apostles, founded partly on tradition. Paul is set before us with the strongly-marked and prominent features of a Jew, yet not without some of the finer lines indicative of Greek thought. His stature was diminutive, and his body disfigured by some lameness or distortion, which may have provoked the contemptuous expressions of his enemies. His beard was long and thin, but his head was bald. The characteristics of his face were, a transparent complexion, which visibly betrayed the quick changes of his feelings; a bright gray eye, under thickly overhanging united eyebrows; a cheerful and winning expression of countenance, which invited the approach and inspired the confidence of strangers. It would be natural to infer, from his continued journeyings and manual labor, that he was possessed of great strength of constitution. But men of delicate health have often gone through the greatest exertions; and his own words on more than one occasion show that he suffered much from bodily infirmity. Peter is represented to us as a man of larger and stronger form, as his character was more abrupt. The quick impulses of his soul revealed themselves in the flashes of a dark eye. The complexion of his face was pale and sallow, and the short hair, which is described as entirely gray at the time of his death, curled black and thick round his temples and his chin when the two apostles stood together at Antioch, twenty years before their martyrdom.

After a short time Paul proposed to Barnabas that they should make a tour of inspection, visiting and watering the churches which they had formerly planted. An unhappy quarrel took place between them, occasioned by the desire of Barnabas to take his nephew Mark along with them, and Paul's want of thorough confidence in Mark, caused by his having left them in Pamphylia. As the two apostles could not agree, they took separate routes, Barnabas and Mark going to Cyprus, while Paul, accompanied by Silas, traversed a large portion of the provinces of Asia Minor.

In these events we see that the apostles were fallible, like the good men whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament, and like the best men of the present day. Paul, though a good and great man, was not perfect any more than other men. The strong will and absolute confidence in the correctness of his own opinions, which made him the bitterest of persecutors while a Jew, still showed themselves after the great change which made him a Christian and the apostle of the Gentiles.

To say that Paul acted from principle in these "sharp contentions" does not alter the aspects of the case. Who ever heard of a church quarrel, or quarrel between ministers, where both parties were not equally conscientious and most steadfast adherents of principle? But a little more humility and less of *human nature* would lead to the discovery of some way by which difficulties could be adjusted and compromised without any sacrifice of principle. When we consider the obligations of Paul to the generous and noble-hearted Barnabas, it is hard for us to apologize for his refusal to permit his friend's nephew to accompany them, even though Mark's conduct on a former occasion may have been worthy of censure.

I know it is common, where Paul appears in antagonism with other Christians in the sacred narrative, to take it for granted, as he did himself, that he was right and they were wrong. But this is no more just or reasonable than it would be in the case of any other Scripture character or of any good man in our own times. The great reverence in which Paul has been held since the Reformation should not make us unjust to those who were associated with him in founding Christianity, nor lead us to give greater weight to his writings than to other portions of the word of God. This was Luther's mistake. Because in his judgment the letter of James conflicted with the doctrine of Paul, he called it an "epistle of straw," and denied its canonical authority. Unconsciously to ourselves, we may fall into substantially the same error. We may have our favorite author and passages in

the Bible, and wrest the other scriptures from their plain and obvious meaning, to make them harmonize with what we are practically making a higher authority.

But after all that can be made of the few occasions in which Paul appears in an unpleasant attitude toward the other apostles —exhibiting infirmities common to him with other historical personages, secular or scriptural—he remains a great and exalted character, towering far above ordinary men, and leaving not merely a distinguished example, but a mass of solid and permanent truth, wedged in amid the temporary discussions of his day. With justifiable egotism he points to his heroic sacrifices in the cause of Christ. Looking at the vast work he accomplished, the opposition he met, the difficulties he surmounted, we cannot blame Paul for his self-commendation. Men and their words are to be judged according to circumstances. "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Following the narrative of these abundant labors, after Paul's separation from Barnabas, we find him visiting Syria and Cilicia; then, striking up in a north-westerly course through one of the "gates" or passes of the Taurus, he returned to Derbe and Lystra. Great must have been his joy to find his young friend Timothy so strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and so well reported of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. It would be with mingled emotions of joy and sorrow that his grandmother and mother saw Timothy depart with Paul and

Silas into the wild regions of Galatia and Phrygia—joy that he was going on so holy and honorable an errand, sorrow at their separation from one whom they had so tenderly nurtured, and at the probable hardships he would be forced to undergo.

Paul now entered on new ground and came among a new race. The Galatians, as the first syllable of their name implies, were of Gallic origin; four centuries before, their ancestors had worshiped under the oaks of Gaul. They had been borne along in an emigration that at last brought them from the west of Europe to the west of Asia. The invasions of Rome and Greece by the Gauls are familiar events of history. The Galatians, or Gallo-Grecians, were connected with the latter event, but, repulsed from Greece, crossed the Ægean and settled in the centre of Asia Minor. Like the race to which they belonged, they were susceptible of quick impressions and sudden changes, with a fickleness equal to their courage and enthusiasm.

After traversing Phrygia and Galatia, Paul came to Troas, which still preserved the immortal name of Troy. It must have been with thrilling interest that the apostle gazed upon the famous plain where, at the dawn of Grecian history, the whole forces of the Greeks had spent their strength for ten years in the siege of Troy, and whose every locality had been invested by the genius of Homer with an interest that would survive to the end of time. But still more intense must have been his feelings when, from the top of the classic Mount Ida, he looked across the Hellespont, and for the first time in his life beheld the blue summits of the European hills. Here a vision appeared to him in the night; "there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us."

That cry of distress was not to be disregarded. Next morning Paul and his companions, of whom the beloved physician Luke was now one, might be seen on the quay of Troas, eagerly inquiring for the first ship to Macedonia. The wind wafts them through the seas that bore, five hundred years before, the magnificent armada

of Xerxes. The story of the shepherd's sling and stone is again about to be realized. These four humble men in the Trojan ship are to accomplish what the millions of Xerxes failed to accomplish—conquer Greece and Europe too.

The first campaign of the gospel of Jesus Christ in Europe was fought in Macedonia; Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea were the principal battle-fields. Philippi was a Roman "colony;" the word denotes a sort of epitome of Rome itself, when the privileges of Romans were held peculiarly sacred. Being more of a military than a commercial city, it had no Jewish synagogue; but devout proselytes and Jews assembled in a prayer-meeting by a river-side. A woman in middle life, the head of a house, a girl possessed by a demon and a cruel jailer were among the persons first struck down at Philippi by the arrows of the King. The benign influence of Christianity in Europe, in elevating woman and then making use of her gentle instrumentality for promoting the cause of Christ, as well as in subduing the most rugged passions of man, seems to have been foreshadowed by these conversions. The freeness of the salvation of the gospel was at the same time gloriously exhibited in the brief and memorable reply to the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?"—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The sustaining and consoling power of divine grace was also beautifully exhibited by Paul and Silas, who prayed and sung praises by night, in the gloomy vaults of the prison, while suffering the agony of the scourge and the stocks. Philippi could have borne sad testimony to the opposite course to which misery and disgrace drive unconverted men, for it was there that both Brutus and Cassius had destroyed themselves. When the jailer was about to follow their example, the voice of the Christian apostle was heard saying, "Do thyself no harm."

From Philippi the apostle proceeded to Thessalonica, an important and busy seaport with a Jewish synagogue. Here a delightful little Christian community was gathered together,

whose "work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope" shone long afterward, in the memory of the apostle, like a green oasis in the desert. From this busy place the holy fame of the new religion, which was embraced by many of the old pagans, sounded out through all the neighboring districts of Macedonia on the north and Achaia on the south.

But persecution drove Paul from Thessalonica, as it had driven him from Philippi. He took refuge in the provincial town of Berea, where, through the diligent study of the Scriptures, many Jews were converted, and also some of the principal Gentiles. The signs of another gathering storm led the brethren in haste to send Paul away, while Silas and Timothy remained at Berea. A ship bound for Athens conveyed the apostle from the shore where Olympus, dark with woods, rises from the plain to the broad summit glittering with snow, which was the home of the Homeric gods. The shepherds from the heights above the vale of Tempe may have watched the sails of his ship that day, as it moved like a white speck over the outer waters of the Thermaic Gulf. The sailors, looking back from the deck, saw the great Olympus rising close above them in snowy majesty. The white speck was wafting to the classic shores of Athens the Hebrew preacher, through whose doctrine the gods of Olympus were to be dethroned for ever, and a purer heaven and a holier life and a brighter immortality presented to Grecian eyes than had yet been dreamt of in all their philosophy.

It would occupy far too much space to describe all the objects that Paul would see, or to fancy all the emotions that would fill his mind, when his ship rode into the harbor of Piræus, and he himself, after passing between the Long Walls that connected the port and the city, found himself fronting the Acropolis of Athens. One thought can hardly have been absent from his mind: in Athens he would see mankind in the circumstances most favorable to the natural man; for if mental culture could enlighten, if the fine arts could purify, if philosophy could elevate, if poetry

could sweeten, if the pagan religion could transform, the Athenians could not but be an enlightened, a pure, a noble, a genial, a holy people. As he walks through the city, he sees everywhere statues of deified heroes as well as the older gods; shrines and temples of every size and form, from the niche in the rock to the magnificent Parthenon; groups of statuary representing the old legends of mythology of which he used to read as a schoolboy; and among the rest, that altar of which he made good use in his speech—"To the unknown God." But Athens is the seat of philosophy as well as the headquarters of mythology. Two sects especially were encountered by him—the Stoics and the Epicureans. The Stoics enforced a sort of stern virtue, a high disregard alike of pleasure and of pain, that sometimes led to noble deeds in those evil times, but not less seldom to such mournful results as the suicide of their first two leaders, Zeno and Cleanthes, and of their most illustrious Roman adherents, Cato and Seneca. Pride was the great characteristic of the Stoic. The Epicureans were the children of pleasure—almost deriding the notion of a God, and encouraging men to live and die in indifference and ease.

On three different spots Paul bore testimony to the truth at Athens. The first was the synagogue of the Jews; the next was a more public platform—the Agora or market-place, the common meeting-place of the Athenians, to which they were always carried when there was anything to gratify that craving for news and excitement which even four centuries before had been rebuked in them by Demosthenes. Some of the philosophers who heard Paul here, wishing to listen to him in a quieter and more solemn place, took him to Areopagus, or Mars' Hill—the place where the judges had sat from time immemorial, to decide causes, civil and religious. It was a scene with which the dread recollections of centuries were associated. It was a place of silent awe in the midst of the gay and frivolous city. No place in Athens was so suitable for a discourse upon the mysteries of religion. Here, gazing on the splendid temple of the Parthenon, Paul

taught that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Under shade of the colossal statue of Minerva, armed with spear, shield and helmet, as the champion of Athens, he declared that the Godhead is not like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device. Here he taught the scoffing Epicureans that the world was not an accidental concourse of atoms, but that it was created by God. Here he summoned the proud and haughty Stoic to repent of all his wickedness, and foretold the coming of a terrible day of retribution by God's Son, of which the certain pledge had been given to all men, in that he had raised him from the dead. The philosophers derided his doctrine, or treated it with indifference, and Paul, in one of his after letters, could only speak of the gospel as "to the Greek, foolishness." Dionysius, one of the judges of the Areopagus, believed, and a few others; but Athens, polite, refined, intellectual, was not one of the places where the gospel triumphed.

Paul had paid his visit to Athens alone; but at Corinth, to which he next proceeded, he was joined by Silas and Timothy. On his way to Corinth he determined that he should make the one great subject of his preaching there "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Corinth was now the actual capital of Greece. The celebrated peninsula, the strifes and struggles of whose republics form so large a chapter of ancient history, had been formed by the Romans into the province of Achaia, with Corinth, situated on the isthmus, or "bridge of the Peloponnesus," for its capital. Corinth was a place of great commercial activity. By its seaport on the west it communicated with Europe, and by that on the east with Asia. It was pre-eminently noted for its licentiousness. In a temple dedicated to Venus, a thousand harlots were supported, in honor of the goddess, at the public expense. It abounded with fornicators and idolaters and adulterers and effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind; with thieves, with covetous, with drunkards, with revilers and with extortioners. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

At Corinth, Paul took up his abode with Aquila and Priscilla, a countryman and countrywoman who, with the rest of the Jews, had lately been expelled by Claudius from Rome. According to Suetonius, the Roman historian, the Jews were always exciting tumults, at the instance of one Chrestus. The origin of this charge probably was that they were exciting tumults against those who worshiped Christ. Doubtless Aquila and Priscilla would give Paul much information about Rome, and perhaps excite that desire to visit it which he began to feel. At Corinth, Paul had great success. Crispus, the ruler of a synagogue, became a convert—a circumstance that must have caused great excitement. Yet Paul's spirit was burdened and depressed. That which distressed him was the bitter and blasphemous opposition to the truth which the Jews were ever exciting. But the Lord mercifully encouraged him in a vision, and for a year and a half he continued to labor at Corinth. It was now that he wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonians—the earliest of all his recorded letters. At last, having a strong desire to be present at one of the festivals at Jerusalem, he set sail for the holy city, taking Ephesus on his way. Promising to try to return to Ephesus, he went on to Jerusalem, and after his visit returned to Antioch, thus completing his second great missionary tour.

The third missionary campaign of the apostle—during all of which he had Timothy for his companion—opened in Phrygia and Galatia, where he had been before. But the chief place to which his attention was directed in this tour was Ephesus. There the way had been prepared for him by the preaching of Apollos, an eloquent Jew of Alexandria, well versed in the Scriptures, who, however, was only a disciple of John the Baptist, and had to be instructed in Christian truth. Ephesus, situated at the mouth of the Cayster, was the chief city of the district to which the name of Asia was first restricted. Its inhabitants were half Greek, half Asiatic, and their religion and superstitions were a compound of the East and the West. Sorcery

or magic—an importation of the East—was exceedingly common. Diana, a goddess of the West, was the great object of worship; but the style of worship had in it much of Oriental mystery and magnificence. The temple of Diana or Artemis, at Ephesus, was renowned over the whole world. It had been two hundred and twenty years in building. Its roof was supported by one hundred and twenty-seven columns, sixty feet high, the gifts of as many kings. The image of Diana, believed to have fallen from heaven, was but of wood, and thus formed a striking contrast to the magnificence around. Ephesus was notorious, besides, both for its luxury and licentiousness.

Yet, from the materials which this wicked place furnished, one of the most beautiful and interesting of all the ancient churches was formed. Rev. ii. 2, 3. No epistle glows with more satisfaction and joyful remembrance than that of Paul to the Ephesians. Even from among the exorcists many converts were obtained, and the value of the books of magic, which they committed to the flames in token of their sincerity, exceeded ten thousand dollars of our money. The religious change was becoming so great that the craftsmen who gained their living by making silver models of the statue of Diana became alarmed and raised an insurrection. The apostle and his companion were rescued from their danger through the eloquence of one of the magistrates of the place, but they were not able to remain in Ephesus. After bidding the church farewell, Paul proceeded to visit the churches of Macedonia. It appears to have been at Ephesus that he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians. 1 Cor. xvi. 8.

On leaving Ephesus, Paul first went to Troas, where he preached with great success (2 Cor. ii. 12); then proceeded to Macedonia and the countries of Greece lying to the north. He seems at this time to have been in a dejected state of mind. At Philippi he wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. He was now actively engaged in a scheme for collecting money for

the poor believers in Judea, designed to show the good will of the Gentiles, and to soften down the bitter feeling of the Jewish Church toward their uncircumcised brethren. Titus, to whom one of the pastoral letters was afterward written, was specially employed by him in promoting this collection. Hearing that Judaizing teachers had been corrupting the church of Galatia, he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, powerfully refuting and remonstrating against the errors in question. Three months were then spent in Corinth, and the Epistle to the Romans was then written and despatched by Phebe. It is remarkable that no mention is made of any apostle or other celebrated man having founded the church at Rome. It was probably quietly formed by converts to Christianity who either left the Jewish synagogue at Rome or came to the city from other countries.

Leaving Europe, Paul now directed his course to Jerusalem. He proceeded by sea, and his voyage was full of interest. After spending a week at Troas, taking a most affectionate farewell of the Ephesian Christians at Miletus, and touching at Coos, Rhodes and Patara, the apostle and his companions sailed to Tyre. A church had existed there since the persecution at the death of Stephen, and there were now not only Christians but prophets in what had once been a great stronghold of Baal and Ashtoreth. Leaving Tyre, the party saluted the brethren at Ptolemais, and at length reached Cæsarea. From that place, in opposition to the remonstrances of the evangelist Philip and other friends, who dreaded the excited feelings of the Jews, Paul traveled to Jerusalem, where he was received kindly by James and the elders, and refreshed them by telling what God had been doing among the Gentiles.

We can only refer in general terms to the occurrences that took place while Paul was in Palestine. The hatred toward him of that part of the church which was leavened with the spirit of the Pharisees found a speedy outlet. On a false clamor being raised, he was beaten by the people in the temple, rescued,

however, by the Roman soldiers, and carried to the neighboring fort and barrack of Antonia; there he was about to be put to the rack, but escaped the torture by declaring himself a Roman citizen; was tried before the Sanhedrim, as Stephen had been twenty-five years before, when he was himself a virulent persecutor; received in a vision a cheering promise of protection from God; and a plot against his life being discovered, was sent, with a large escort, by night, to the Roman capital, Cæsarea. The places through which he passed were fitted to encourage faith and fortitude. It would be interesting to fancy his feelings as about midnight he passed Beth-horon the nether, and gazed, perhaps, on the moon looking down on the valley of Ajalon, where, fifteen hundred years before, it had lingered to witness the triumph of Joshua. The light of the morning sun, rising behind the snowy crest of Hermon, would find him in the plain of Sharon, and as he rode along, the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys at his feet, and the young roe sporting on the mountains of Bether on his right, would carry his mind to the Song of Solomon, and assure him both of the love and presence of his Lord. In the after part of the day, he and the seventy troopers that accompanied him, after passing the colossal statues of Julius Cæsar and Rome that adorned the new capital, would dismount from their weary horses at the barracks of Cæsarea.

The Roman governor resident at Cæsarea at this time was Claudius Felix, an unscrupulous, sensual profligate, whose wife, Drusilla, was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I. On his first appearance before Felix, Paul was remanded, under pretence of being tried again; the next time, in presence of Drusilla, he made Felix tremble as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come; after that he was kept a prisoner at Cæsarea for two years. At the end of that period Felix was recalled from Palestine, and Porcius Festus sent as governor in his room. Paul was now tried again, and on this occasion took his memorable appeal to Cæsar. In the mean time, Herod Agrippa II., king

of Chalcis, in Syria, with his sister Bernice, having come on a visit to Cæsarea, Paul was brought before them, and in another powerful address "almost persuaded Agrippa to be a Christian." His appeal to Cæsar could be heard nowhere but at Rome; and soon after, under charge of a centurion of Augustus' band, named Julius, Paul, with other prisoners, set sail in a ship bound for Adramyttium, for the metropolis of the world.

The record of Paul's voyage to Rome, in the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts, is remarkably interesting, partly for the incidents that occurred, partly for its minute information respecting the seamanship of the time, and partly also for the wonderful verification of the narrative, in its minutest particulars, which modern inquiry has supplied. The vessel, on leaving the great dock constructed by Herod at Cæsarea, touched at Sidon; then passing to the north of Cyprus, through the gulfs of Cilicia and Pamphylia, afforded the apostle a view—probably his last—of his native mountains. At Myra, in Lycia, a ship was found chartered for Rome, to which the prisoners were transferred. After creeping along slowly as far as Cnidus, adverse winds forced the ship out of her direct course, compelling her to pass southward, under lee of the island of Crete, as far as the harbor called Fair Havens. After waiting long for a favorable breeze, the vessel set sail, but had not proceeded far when she was caught by a furious gale from the north-east. The crew seem to have turned round the right side of the vessel to the wind, and allowed her to be carried along, on the starboard tack, in a westerly direction. In the circumstances it is reckoned that she would drift at the rate of about a mile and a half in the hour. After a fortnight of discomfort and terror that can hardly be conceived, the sailors became sensible, one midnight, that they were approaching land. The ship was immediately anchored astern, and daylight anxiously waited for. When it came, it was observed that a creek ran into the shore. Into this creek the vessel was attempted to be run, but in the attempt her bow

stuck fast in the bottom. Partly by swimming, and partly through the aid of boards and broken pieces of the ship, all the passengers, who were two hundred and seventy-six in number, got safely to land.

In the course of this fearful voyage Paul distinguished himself very greatly by his presence of mind, his sagacious advice, his regard to the welfare of his fellow-passengers, and his boundless confidence in God. At an early period of the storm he had relieved many hearts by telling of a vision in which God's angel had assured him that the lives of all should be preserved. He had prevailed on the party to refresh themselves with food after a very long fast, and had prevented the stealthy escape of the sailors when their approach to land was first discovered. The wonderful influence which the poor prisoner in chains acquired in the ship was a proof, not only of his native vigor of mind, but of the calmness and wisdom, in the hour of danger, which he had got from fellowship with God.

The island on which the ship was cast was Malta—now a part of the British possessions. The bay where the shipwreck occurred still bears the name of St. Paul, and all the circumstances of the shipwreck, as recorded in the Acts, agree wonderfully with existing appearances. The island was inhabited by a people of Phœnician origin. After spending three months among them, Paul and his companions embarked in another vessel; touched at Syracuse in Sicily; had to wait at Rhegium for a favorable wind to carry them through the Straits of Messina; and at last, after gazing on the smoking crater of Vesuvius and the lovely scenery of the Bay of Naples, landed at Puteoli.

From this seaport to Rome—a distance of one hundred and fifty miles—the apostle traveled by land. Advancing by the Appian Way, he would pass countless localities, memorable by associations both with the mythology and the history of the Romans, which would send through his breast the thrill of emotion with which every scholar looks for the first time on

classic scenes. At Appii Forum, fifty miles from Rome, and again at the Three Taverns, deputations from the Christians of the city came to offer to the great apostle of the Gentiles the expression of their deep regard and affection. From a height about ten miles distant from Rome he would catch his first view of the imperial city—a vast conglomeration of houses, the homes of two millions of people. At last he is in the streets of Rome. Its palaces, its temples, its aqueducts, its theatres and its columns rise on every side. The long-cherished desire of his heart is fulfilled—he is to hear the echoes of salvation reverberated from the seven hills of Rome.

Never was a city in greater need of a regenerating gospel. Corruption and profligacy in every form were at their height. Crimes far too abominable to be named were openly committed and witnessed in the houses of the first families. The emperor Nero, though only in his twenty-fourth year, had begun his awful course of crime—had already stained his hands in the blood of his mother and his wife, and was living under the influence of his mistress, the infamous Poppæa, a proselyte to Judaism. The free citizens were more than a million, the slaves about the same in number. Rome was like London, with all its miseries, follies and vices exaggerated, and without Christianity.

At first Paul endeavored to make impressions on the Jewish inhabitants, but his efforts were in vain. He then turned to the Gentiles, with whom he had much greater success. For two years he continued a prisoner, dwelling in his own lodging, but constantly chained to a Roman soldier. Some of these soldiers appear to have been converted to Christ—won, very probably, not less through the influence of his consistent example and loving spirit than the force of his arguments. Even in Nero's palace converts were made through his instrumentality. It is certain that the Roman church increased amazingly, because, a year or two after, the number of Christians who were slaughtered

by Nero was enormous. During these two years were written the Epistles to Philemon, the Colossians, the Ephesians and the Philippians.

At last Paul's trial came on: most probably it was conducted in the immediate presence of Nero. The narrative of Acts comes abruptly to a close before telling the result. It is from Paul's epistles we learn that he was set free. How the remaining portion of his life was spent can be gathered only from indirect notices in his letters and the statements of uninspired writers.

It is generally believed that from Rome he went to Asia Minor, and from there to Macedonia. He seems then to have gone to Spain, where he is thought to have spent two years. Returning to Ephesus, he found matters in a somewhat critical condition. In Crete, too, which he visited about this time, he found much cause for anxiety. False teachers were busy perverting the truth and sapping the foundation of Christianity. The First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus seem to have been written about this time, instructing these faithful men, who were laboring respectively in Ephesus and in Crete, to resist all false doctrine and zealously maintain the truth. Perhaps the Epistle to the Hebrews was also written about this time, but its date as well as its authorship is uncertain.

Paul had hoped to spend the winter at Nicopolis, in Macedonia, but he was not allowed to remain there. He was arrested on a new charge, and hurried to Rome to stand a second trial. Since he had been last at Rome, Nero had conducted himself in a very shameful way. More than half the city had been burned by an awful fire, which lasted for six days, and which some ascribe to Nero himself. The blame was laid by him upon the Christians, who were now an exceedingly numerous body. A frightful persecution raged against them. "Some were crucified; some disguised in the skins of beasts and hunted to death with dogs; some were wrapped in robes impregnated with inflammable materials and set on fire at night, that they might serve

to illuminate the circus of the Vatican and the gardens of Nero, where this diabolical monster exhibited the agonies of his victims to the public, and gloated over them." The number who perished was very great. Paul's privileges on his second confinement seem to have been much smaller than on his first. The Second Epistle to Timothy was now written by him, in the full expectation of being speedily offered up. When brought to trial, in presence of a large number of leading men, he was enabled to make a bold statement of the gospel. But no defence could avail against the will of Nero. The apostle, on being called a second time, was condemned. Near the spot now occupied by the English cemetery, his head was struck from his body. Devout men carried the headless corpse to the catacombs, or subterranean vaults below Rome, to which in after times the martyrs used often to fly for concealment. There, in some unknown vault, rests the body of the greatest of apostles, awaiting the fulfillment of the words so nobly applied by himself—"Death shall be swallowed up of victory."

### AT CÆSAR'S BAR.

"At my first answer no man stood by me,"
So spake he, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord.
Alone before the imperial majesty
He stood, unawed by either fire or cord.

The haughty ruler over many a land
Frowns from the judgment-seat, and round his throne
Rome's dark-browed senators, a sullen band,
Gaze with stern eyes on him who stands alone.

All round the hall fierce eyes of soldiers gleam,
With clash of armor moving to and fro;
'Twixt frequent pillars shines old Tiber's stream,
And the Eternal City, stretched below.

Close round the bases of the Palatine
Clusters the flat-roofed town, and spreading fills
The broad Campagna, almost to the line,
Distant and purple, of the Alban hills.

Up the steep path had Paul the prisoner trod,
Past Cæsar's prison and his palace-gate,
Past the proud shrine of the triumphant god,
To where, the crown of all, sits Cæsar throned in state.

Before the massive bar he stands,
A bar of solid marble graven,
And lays on it his fettered hands,
And speaks of love, and hope, and heaven.

And smiles; for he is not alone,
Though none may see his present Friend,
His best-beloved, his faithful One,
Who will stand with him to the end.

What though that end be present pain
And death, his Lord will still deliver.
Death has no sting; yea, death is gain,
For it is life with him for ever.

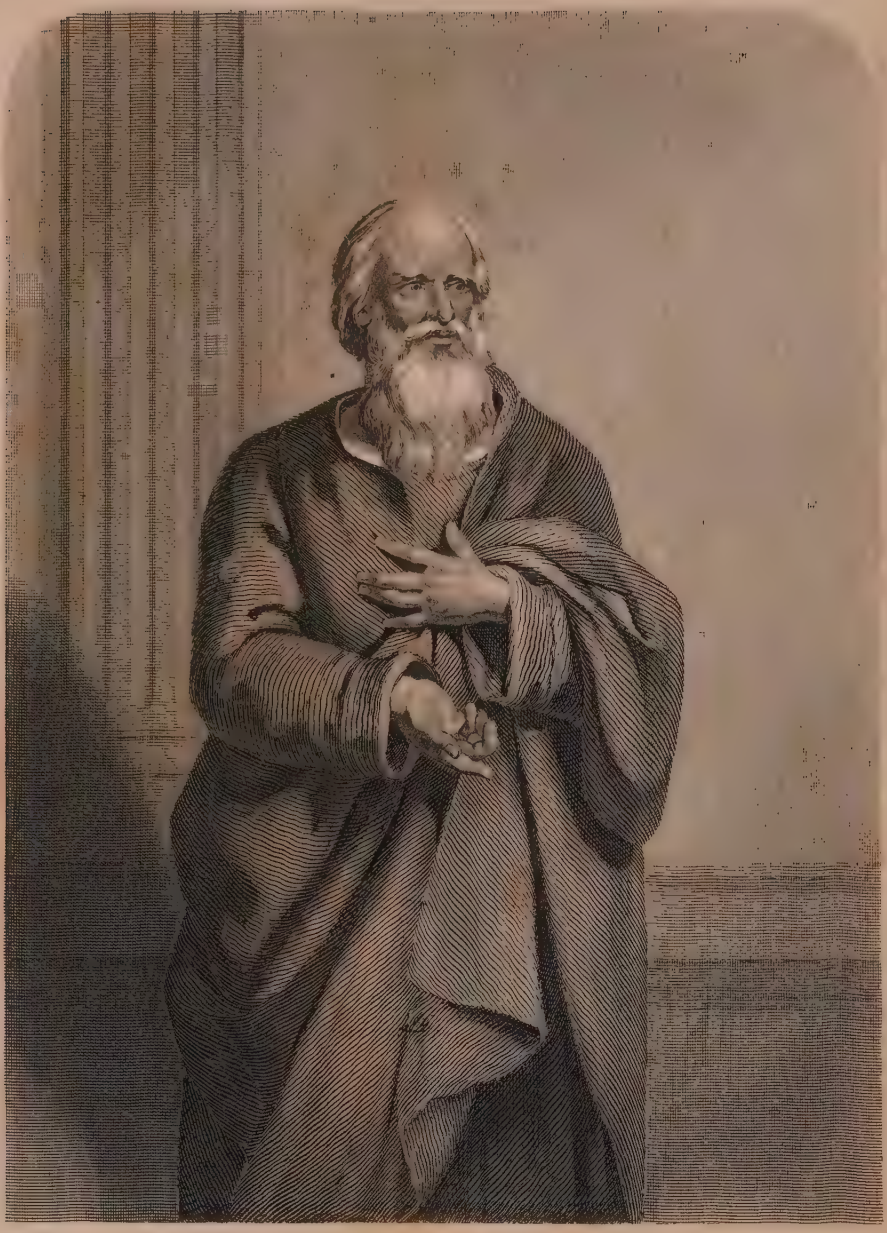
Long ages passed, the mighty empire fell,
The Cæsar's palace lost in ruins lay;
Nor portico nor pillar stood to tell
Where Cæsar once had held imperial sway.

Then came an hour when the workman's spade
Disturbed the dust that ages gathered there;
Outlines of hall and temple bare were laid,
The shattered column and the crumbled stair.

Strange, 'mid the ruins of the Palatine
One fragment stands: a marble bar, snow-white,
Carved from the solid mass, with trellised line
Still clear and sharp as when it first saw light.

"And here," they say, "was Cæsar's judgment-hall,
This marble bar once fenced his ivory seat;
Here before Nero once stood holy Paul."
O precinct hallowed by the martyr's feet!

Here many a stranger from a far-off land
Pauses to gaze where Paul once took his stand;
Before him at the bar he sees the saint,
Almost he hears the glowing words outpoured,
Almost he sees the presence, fair and faint,
Of Him who stood beside, the martyr's Lord.



*Barnabas*

# XLIV.

## BARNABAS.

IN sacred or profane history we find few characters more amiable or worthy of imitation than Barnabas. His kindly disposition, and the service which he rendered to Paul, constitute him a good representative of personal friendship. If in any one, among the associates of the apostle, the idea of companionship is, as it were, personified, that one is Barnabas. Something of this characteristic is made known to us in the designation which the earlier apostles gave to him when they styled him the "son of consolation." It is probable, indeed, that this title had reference chiefly to his power of warm and instructive "exhortation;" but even if thus interpreted, it reveals to us social qualities of high value, and certainly his actions are in harmony with this power of giving encouragement by his words.

In those happy earliest days of the Church, when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul"—when none of them said "that aught of the things which he possessed was his own," and consequently "none among them lacked"—Barnabas, "a Levite of the island of Cyprus," is the one among the disciples who is specified as "selling his land, and laying the price at the apostles' feet" for the general good of the Christian community. Either the amount which he gave was peculiarly large, or there was something in his manner of giving which causes him to be singled out in this description of

self-denying generosity. The word *generosity*, better than any other, describes the character of Barnabas. The first incident from his life exhibits to us generosity in its literal sense of the free surrendering of property for the general good. But this is by no means the main point on which we should lay hold in striving to learn something from the example. Mere giving may arise from various motives. But the deep inward principle of generosity applies to all the conduct of life, and finds its exercise even when we have no property to give. A generous man is a man whose heart goes out freely and warmly toward others —who is not always thinking of himself—not calculating nicely how this or that will affect his own comfort, his own credit, his own position. Such a man is always ready for kind and neighborly acts. And such a man, too, can easily throw himself into mutual understanding and co-operation with others for the general good; whereas a man who is centred in himself is always liable to be mistaken and to mistake those around him. Let us illustrate this by a homely comparison.

There is a characteristic difference between houses in the East and houses in the West. Our dwellings have their windows on the outside, from which we can look on the open country and see freely what is passing elsewhere. A domestic dwelling in the East, on the contrary, opens into an inner court, which presents the only view, while all around is the dead dull wall. There is something of the same kind of difference between one man and another. Some can easily begin frank and open communications with their neighbors; other men cannot or will not. Barnabas is an example of the former, and he was all the happier in consequence, and all the more useful.

And there is another mark of generosity, suggested by the passage we have quoted, which should not be overlooked. A generous man, acting on warm impulses, does not delay in doing good, but acts promptly and on the moment. The help wanted by the Christian community in Jerusalem was wanted then, and Bar-

nabas gave it then. He might very naturally have considered the various reasons there were for delay. For instance, it was probable that similar need for assistance might occur on some future occasion. Besides this, many other persons were giving liberally at that time. But Barnabas did not reason in this way; probably he did not reason at all. And this at least we may learn from him, that when undoubted good is to be done, it is best to do it heartily and to do it now.

We turn to the first of the passages which describe circumstances in the life of Barnabas connected with Paul. Generosity is here again manifest, but in another and a more winning aspect. It was a most critical moment in Paul's life and in the history of the Church. On his return to Jerusalem, after his sudden conversion at Damascus, he was naturally suspected. "He assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." It is difficult to blame them, for what could they have thought of him? Here was a man who had been their unscrupulous enemy, "breathing out slaughter and threatenings," dragging "both men and women into prison," ready to undergo any toil and travel to any distance if only he might extirpate the Christians; and now this man was in Jerusalem again, professing to be their friend and wishing to be associated with them. They must have thought it was some contrivance, some stratagem arranged for their harm. It must be remembered that they were not then a powerful body, but very weak, with no protection from the authorities. They were like a flock of sheep; and they might well say of this son of Benjamin, in the sentiment applied to his great ancestor, He ravins like a wolf: in the morning he devoured the prey: and now in the evening he is dividing the spoil. Gen. xlix, 27.

If we consider the crisis, we see how much harm would have come both to Paul's personal comfort and happiness, and to his power of extending and consolidating the Church, if this most natural and most serious misunderstanding had not been re-

moved. The happy instrument of removing it was Barnabas. "He took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." The result was entire confidence and hearty co-operation in the cause of Christ. He who had been a persecutor was now with the apostles at Jerusalem, as a trusted friend and fellow-laborer, "coming in and going out" and "speaking boldly."

Misunderstandings are very common in this poor world of ours. People will differ without reason—will take unfavorable views of one another—will think they are on opposite sides when they are not really on opposite sides. When such a state of things is seen to arise, this is the great opportunity for those—and they are very numerous—who occupy themselves in gossip and making mischief. But this is also the Christian's opportunity for making peace and promoting co-operation in good and useful works. Let the reader ask himself what he is in the habit of doing in such a case. A very common habit with us is simply to look on, under such circumstances, and to be passive—possibly even to take a sort of pleasure in the infirmities of our neighbors. "These people," we say, "*will* look upon one another as enemies when they ought to be friends; they are very foolish, but we cannot help it," and we do nothing. Such was not the view or the practice of Barnabas. And this system of letting things go crooked when we might do something toward putting them straight is really moral cowardice or moral laziness; and we must remember that we are responsible, not only for the harm which we positively cause, but in a great measure also for the evil which we might have prevented.

Only it must be recollected that whatever good we do in this way must be done, not by harshness and rebuke, but by sympathy and persuasion. This is a principle of almost universal application, and to nothing is it more applicable than to cases

of religious misunderstanding. But, most strangely, we are in the habit of forgetting this. We live in a time of much religious debate. If others hold wrong opinions, our wish is to induce them to adopt right opinions. But is it wise to attempt to secure this end by the method of *attack?* Let us ask any man to refer to his own experience. Were you ever convinced yourself by being attacked? When you were assailed, was not your first impulse to resist and to shelter yourself as closely as possible within your old defences? You have heard the fable of the traveler, the wind and the sun. The traveler was enveloped in a thick cloak. The wind and the sun contended which of them could most easily induce him to lay the cloak aside. The wind made the attempt first. A furious storm came over the heavens, the trees were broken, the cattle were terrified, the cold sleet drove angrily across the plain. But the traveler drew his cloak more closely to him, and folded it round and round. And now the weather cleared. The landscape grew bright again. The sun's turn was now come to make the attempt. As the warmth of the rays increased, the traveler gradually relaxed his hold. Each step made him feel that the cloak was more and more a burden; he laid it aside; and the sun had succeeded where the wind had failed. What could never have been done by violent attack was easily accomplished by gentle persuasion. Barnabas, at a critical time, not by harsh discussion, but by genial warmth, removed a prejudice; and we, following in his steps, may perhaps find many opportunities of doing the same.

Nor is it merely the satisfaction and happiness of religious co-operation which is to be considered in such a case. Simple offices of Christian kindness may be of far greater moment to the community at large than can be calculated at the time. This incident in the life of Barnabas is of peculiar value, because it shows us what great results may follow to the progress of the gospel from a single act of timely generosity.

The second passage, which sets Barnabas before us in close

companionship with the apostle, leads us to give him a very great place in the apostolic history, both for a far-seeing and enlightened intelligence, and for a noble and generous nature. News came to Jerusalem that the reception of the gospel was proceeding with unexampled success in the northern parts of Syria, especially in Antioch. The authorities of the Church felt instinctively that Barnabas was the fittest man to send on a mission of inquiry and encouragement. The account of his feeling and conduct on his arrival at Antioch is replete with information concerning his mind and character. "When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad." We recognize here immediately one of those sure indications which are prominent in Paul's description of true Christian charity—viz., that it "rejoiceth in the truth." And then follow words which exhibit Barnabas as a "son of exhortation": "He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord." In all this there are the clear tokens of a genial, friendly and zealous disposition. Then, immediately below, it is added, "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith"—a sentence which seems to concentrate in itself the full description of the man. Those who unite thus the inward power of divine grace with natural aptitude for persuasion are commonly successful. And the success of Barnabas at Antioch was great: "Much people was added to the Lord."

Such occurrences, taking place in a city so populous, and so eminent both in political and mercantile life, were of peculiar moment to the future history of the Church. Barnabas evidently felt the critical value of the opportunity, for he decided to stay at Antioch. But something of still greater importance follows. He knew of Paul's special mission to the Gentiles. He felt how desirable it was that his friend should be brought to labor in the midst of this movement of active thought and serious conviction at Antioch. Accordingly, he "went to Tarsus to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.

And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people."

We cannot dwell too carefully on this transaction, whether we wish to estimate the impulse thus given to the progress of Christianity, or to appreciate the distinctive features of the character of Barnabas. It was at Antioch, under the joint ministry of these two men, that the Church of Christ first became conscious of itself, so to speak, as a great self-existent community, and received its proper designation. Acts xi. 26. From Antioch, too, proceeded the first grand missionary expedition of the Church in the persons of these two men. Acts xiii. 4. It is, however, rather the individual part played by Barnabas at this time on which we are here to dwell. His friend, since their last meeting, though fully recognized as a true disciple by the Christians at Jerusalem (and this recognition was due to Barnabas), had been driven away by persecution, and had been living and working in the shade at Tarsus. Certainly we cannot suppose him to have been idle. But it was Barnabas who gave him the great opportunity which was now open before him. Barnabas may be said, in a certain sense, to have made Paul what he afterward became. He brought him out of obscurity. He put him in the fore-front, though he must have been well aware that he was likely to become more distinguished and powerful than himself. This is that peculiar mark of a generous disposition which was mentioned above—the absence of anxiety for personal credit, the readiness for friendly combination in useful undertakings without any selfish end in view. There are some men who have no heart for any enterprise unless they can have the first place in it. This is perhaps a prevalent temptation with most energetic characters. But this habit of mind is not according to the law laid down by Christ: "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." And Barnabas is a good example to show us how such temptation can be overcome.

We do not wonder at the confidence which he inspired on

various occasions, and in reference to very different subjects. Thus, when charitable contributions were soon afterward sent from Antioch to the poor Christians in Judea, he was chosen, with Paul, to convey the gift. At another time, when the two men were engaged in missionary work, and garlands and sacrifices were brought out with the intention of doing worship to the apostles, the title which these poor idolaters of Lystra gave to Barnabas seems like a recognition of his benignity. Acts xiv. 12. And afterward, when a very serious religious question required to be settled, affecting the whole future condition of Gentile converts, he again was chosen, with three others, to convey the decisive letter from Jerusalem to Antioch; and it is said, in the very phrase which is the translation of his name, that when the letter was read "they rejoiced for the consolation." Acts xv. 31.

The first missionary journey had been happily accomplished, but soon after the close of it a sharp quarrel took place between the two men who had labored so well together. Their companion on the journey (John-Mark, a near relative of Barnabas) had been unfaithful in Pamphylia, had shrunk from the difficulties and dangers of the enterprise and had returned to his home. Acts xiii. 13. We are told, near the end of the fifteenth chapter, that Paul and Barnabas again proposed to "go and visit their brethren in every city where they had preached the word of the Lord, to see how they fared." The strong desire, and, indeed, determination, of Barnabas was to take his young relative along with them once more. "But Paul thought it not good to take him with them who departed from them in Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work: and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other" and took different routes.

After this event we have no further account of Barnabas, the rest of the book of the Acts of the Apostles being taken up with the life of Paul—the book being written by one of Paul's companions. But tradition tells us that he went to Milan and

became the first bishop of the church in that city. We have an epistle, in twenty-one chapters, called by the name of Barnabas, the authenticity of which has been defended by some great writers. But the candid student of the Bible needs no remains of this kind to make him revere the memory of this truly great and noble man. His deeds—of more worth than any words—however slight the record of them, entitle him to a place among the great founders of our religion. And, personally, he stands among the first of the "men worth imitating" whose lives are given to us in the Bible.

# XLV.

## APOLLOS.

THE first thing to be taken into account in estimating any man who has played an important part in life is the influence to which he was exposed in his early days. The associations of his youth, the place of his training, the manner of his education,—these things have usually much to do with the career which follows.

Now, we know what Alexandria was. Even in the Acts of the Apostles we see it in its relations to the religious life of the Jews in Jerusalem, and to the world-wide commerce of heathen Italy. This city was a most remarkable meeting-place of East and West, and was characterized alike by mercantile and mental activity. Even the memory of Alexander, its great founder, would tend to produce breadth of view among the Alexandrians, to make them tolerant and less disposed than others to lay stress on national distinctions. Here, too, the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, and here a famous school of biblical interpretation grew up side by side with schools of Greek philosophy. Such mutual relations of Jews and heathens in this place were among the providential preparations for the spread of Christianity.

In the midst of these influences Apollos was brought up, and the accomplishments thus acquired were of essential service to him in his future work. Even if we consider Alexandria only as a school of high education, a resort of learned men, and a

place affording opportunities, if rightly used, for the training of the mind, it is instructive to observe how God made use of such opportunities in preparing his servant for his appointed task. And this thought leads us to the homely but very useful remark, that we ought to set a high value on early training, even as regards this world's studies. We cannot tell to what beneficial and religious purposes a good education may be made subservient.

Another thought, too, is suggested by thus viewing Alexandria as the starting-point of Apollos. It is interesting to mark how God draws from different sources what is meant ultimately to flow together in one beneficent stream. The contrast between Paul's training and that of Apollos was probably very great. The latter was nurtured in Greek scholarship at Alexandria; the former was "brought up" in rabbinical learning "at the feet of Gamaliel" in Jerusalem. Yet afterward they met and became fellow-workers in the cause of the gospel. It is an example full of instruction and encouragement to ourselves, inviting us, in regard to our own experience and our own co-operation with others, to consider and admire God's providential ordering of the early steps of our lives.

Hitherto we have been looking rather on the secular side, now we must turn to the more directly religious side, of the preparation of Apollos for the work that was appointed him. And this we see comprised in two particulars: first, we find—as, indeed, we should expect from the circumstances of the case—that he was learned in the Old Testament Scriptures; next, we are told that he had received some instruction—only elementary, it is true, but still very important—in the facts and doctrines of Christianity.

We cannot dwell too carefully on this, that it was through being "mighty in the Scriptures" that Apollos became mighty in other respects. This knowledge of the Jewish Bible, this apprehension of its meaning, this power of explaining and illus-

trating its contents, became the basis of all his subsequent usefulness. It requires the exercise of but little thought to draw out all the benefit of this example for ourselves. With him this sacred possession was limited to the Old Testament. We have, in addition, the still higher blessing of the New; so that whatever argument there was in his case for the acquisition of rich stores of biblical knowledge is immensely strengthened in ours.

But though the Scriptures, with which Apollos was familiar, were simply the books of the Old Testament, he had obtained, before he came to Ephesus, some knowledge—and good knowledge too, though imperfect—of the Christian revelation. He had been "instructed in the way of the Lord" so as to be able to "teach diligently the things of the Lord," knowing, however, only the baptism of John. Whether he had come in contact with John the Baptist personally, or acquired his knowledge through some of those who had heard John's preaching in Judea and who had gone from thence to Alexandria, we cannot tell. The latter supposition is the more probable. However this may be, he knew the gospel system up to the level of John's teaching, and no higher.

Now, here a remark may be made which is worthy of some attention. If Apollos knew all that John the Baptist had taught, he knew the most important part of Christianity, for John had said of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The gospel system, indeed, contains much more than this. In due time sacraments were instituted, a ministry was set apart, a great system of morals was given, applicable to all the circumstances of our lives, and the teaching and strengthening power of the Holy Ghost was made known and promised. But in these words of John the Baptist by the bank of Jordan we have the main point. However far our religious attainments may ultimately reach, it is here, in the redemption wrought out by Christ for sin, that we have the well-spring from which the rest flows out. Let us never lose

this thought from our mind. In all our study, all our work, let the great central principle never be overlaid or forgotten.

But now we begin to enter upon considerations which relate not so much to the advantages and opportunities that Apollos possessed as to features of his personal character.

It is said that he was "eloquent." Now, on this I do not dwell, except so far as to note that God chooses his instruments suitably. Eloquence is a gift bestowed only on a few. We may be very useful without eloquence. We may be very mischievous with eloquence. The point of real moment to all of us here is that in the case of Apollos this gift was sanctified and turned to a religious use.

A similar remark, too, might perhaps be made regarding his "fervency of spirit." Apollos was evidently a man of warm temperament, and temperaments vary; some are naturally warmer than others. And yet is it not evident that there must be warmth wherever the true love of Christ is present? There must be enthusiasm where Christ has been received fully into the heart; and enthusiasm in ourselves is God's instrument for kindling enthusiasm in others. So that in this respect, too, there is something for every one of us to learn from Apollos, and to make the groundwork of self-examination.

But the same sentence presents to us another feature which might not at first sight attract our notice. "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord;" "he taught diligently the things of the Lord;" he learnt the way of God "more perfectly." From these phrases—especially as read in the original Greek—I should infer that he had that habit of mind which we call accuracy; and it is a most important habit—far more important than is commonly supposed. The difference between one man and another in regard to real influence in the world relates not so much to amount of knowledge as accuracy of knowledge. Moreover, progressive advance in religious knowledge depends, at each step, upon accuracy. And now we ask

the further question: On what does accuracy depend? The answer is easy. For the most part it depends upon attention. An inattentive learner never becomes an accurate scholar. Justly, then, do we lay great stress on attention in the teaching of the young. The exercise, too, of this faculty depends in a great measure upon ourselves; so that here again Apollos is brought face to face with our own experience, and gives to us in his example a most useful admonition.

But at this point—in the mode of his coming in contact with Aquila and Priscilla, and so indirectly with Paul—we begin to note a moral and religious feature of Apollos which merits our special attention, because it is singularly characteristic of him, as well as full of beneficial suggestions to ourselves. When Aquila and Priscilla had heard Apollos in the synagogue, "they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." These two Jewish Christians—as we learn from the early part of the chapter—were "tent-makers" with whom Paul had made acquaintance at Corinth, and whom he had left at Ephesus a short time previous to the arrival of Apollos. They became the religious instructors of this Alexandrian stranger, who in their hands was a most willing learner. Thus, here we have an eloquent man, a learned man, a fervent man, not unwilling to be taught, and taught too by plain and humble people who were engaged in business. One of these teachers, too, was a woman. It was not from a theological college that Apollos obtained his advanced religious instruction. In making this observation we are certainly not justified in suggesting that Scripture throws any contempt on learning or scholarship. We have seen the very contrary above, in the cases both of this Jew of Alexandria and of Paul himself. Still, the fact is as stated here. The secular training of Apollos came from a very distinguished source, his high religious training from a very lowly one. How often has this been the case since! Those who have been eminent in university honors have often learned their best

lessons of religion even from the poor, and often from women, in the retired hours of domestic life. By such methods God's providence brings all parts of a man's experience into harmony, and causes all to bear upon the one point of active service. Those men who produce great religious results on the minds of others have usually drawn their own teaching from very various sources. Many things are made tributary to that stream of wide influence which in the end flows full and strong. But there must be a teachable spirit if the benefits are to be fully realized. We must become children if we are to be high in the kingdom of heaven. This was exemplified in the instance of Apollos. Let it be our honest desire that it may be exemplified in ours!

Next we turn to notice the active career of usefulness on which he now entered. Equipped, as we have seen, with varied knowledge, he was filled with a noble zeal to make that knowledge fruitful. His desires turned with characteristic energy to a distant scene of labor; nor is it difficult to conjecture the reason which attracted his thoughts toward Corinth. The name and importance of the place were very familiar to him. Alexandria, Ephesus and Corinth were connected together by the intercourse of constant trade. But especially his friends Aquila and Priscilla would, in their conversation, be constantly speaking of Paul's work in Achaia, where they first had met him. The names of his chief converts, too, would be frequently mentioned, with the difficulties and troubles of the young Christian community in that district. Thus Apollos was seized with the desire of doing public service on the field which was prepared to his hand, and of continuing the work which Paul had already begun, and Aquila and Priscilla were in nowise loth to encourage him in the enterprise. They evidently rejoiced in the prospect of such aid being given to their Corinthian friends, whom they knew to be in the midst of perilous temptations. "The brethren" in Ephesus shared these feelings, "and wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive" Apollos. The mention of this fact is full of

interest, for it is the first recorded instance of commendatory letters—a kind of correspondence which became, in the times that immediately succeeded, an instrument of the utmost value for binding together the separated parts of the growing Church. Armed with such letters, Apollos crossed the sea from Ephesus to Corinth, and the result is told in forcible though simple language: "When he was come to Corinth, he helped them much which had believed through grace; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

What a great position was this, to be the organ of friendly communication between two churches, to bind together two parts of the Christian community, and to communicate strength where strength was needed! And let it not be forgotten that helping work of this kind, on a smaller or larger scale, is within the power of us all.

Here it is that we see the exertions of Paul and Apollos in the cause of the gospel, though starting from two different points, brought harmoniously into one focus. Attempts, indeed, were made, too successfully, to separate the church of Corinth into antagonistic sections connected with the names of these two men, but in heart and intention their work was one. Just in this moment of Paul's life it is that the First Epistle to the Corinthians comes in, to enable us to continue the biography of Apollos, and to obtain from it fresh lessons very useful for our times.

The Epistle, soon after its opening, makes very pointed allusions to Apollos. After introductory salutations, thanksgiving and advice, the apostle begins his rebuke suddenly: "It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ;" and again, after an interval, he returns to the same subject thus: "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not

carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." At this point it is worth while to notice, in passing, how exactly, and yet how unconsciously—so to speak—the facts here implied harmonize with the history which we find in the Acts. The Corinthians are reminded that Apollos continued among them the work which Paul had begun. Paul arrived first at Corinth, Apollos afterward. But this is not all. It is implied that Apollos had been there in the interval between Paul's personal visit on the second missionary journey and the writing of this letter, which we know to have taken place at Ephesus on the third missionary journey.

The arrival of this learned, eloquent and fervent man, though intended for the spreading and deepening of practical religion, had been followed by the formation of religious parties. Some of these Corinthian Christians had a preference for Paul, some for Apollos. So they ranged themselves in different sections and called themselves by different names. All this was very natural, though very wrong. Each of these two missionaries of Christ had his own peculiar gifts and means of influence. In all that we usually sum up under the term popularity, Apollos was probably far superior. On the other hand, Paul had been first in the field, had founded the church in Corinth and came with supreme authority. Besides this, individual hearts and minds had been relatively brought more closely into contact with the one or the other. Thus that deplorable growth of party spirit took place at Corinth which has had its counterpart ever since in all ages of the Church.

It is not needed here to attempt any discrimination of the exact characteristics of these parties in Corinth, nor, indeed, is this an easy task. It is more important for us to ascertain the cure for this evil tendency among ourselves. The true remedy

is to be found in those general principles which Paul enunciates in this Epistle. We are to look up to that one common divine source from whence all gifts and graces proceed. He reminds the Corinthians that they are to think even of their greatest teachers—whether they were Apollos or Paul himself—as "ministers" through whom God works in them spiritual good. They are not to exalt one at the expense of another. They are to view all the spiritual benefit that comes to them by human instrumentality as sent by God. "Let no man glory in men," he says; "for all things are yours—whether Paul or Apollos, or things present, or things to come—all are yours."

Now, the question arises—and in estimating his character it is quite essential to answer the question—whether this party spirit which was developed at Corinth was in any way the fault of Apollos, and whether, when it was developed, he encouraged it at all. Here another passage from the latter part of the same Epistle presents itself to our attention, and supplies the answer. The apostle writes: "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time: but he will come when he shall have convenient time." We perceive that by this time Apollos had left Corinth and returned to Ephesus, and that he and Paul were in personal companionship together. It is the first record which we possess of their actual meeting, though indirectly, as we have seen, they had been in active co-operation. At Ephesus they had abundant opportunity of conversing together concerning the state of things in Corinth, and viewed in the light of this fact, the verse before us is very instructive. There is no doubt that, with so much zeal, so much learning, so much eloquence, so much popularity, Apollos might have made himself eminent as a party leader. In most ages of the Church such gifts have been used, too willingly, for such purposes. But this Apollos would not do. There are good reasons, as we have seen, for believing that in some attractive qualities he was far

superior to Paul. But he preferred the safety and welfare of the Church to his own self-aggrandizement. And how considerate is his conduct, as made known to us on this occasion! Paul wished him to go to Corinth at this time, but for the present he firmly declined; his appearance there would only have been the signal for a new outbreak of this party-spirit.

And indeed how admirable is the conduct of these two apostolic men one toward another! Their mutual relation, with the personal feeling exhibited on each side at a critical time, must be specially observed. Nor is there any difficulty in seeing, on the part of Paul, the most perfect confidence that Apollos would not abuse an opportunity; and, on the other side, the most delicate and thoughtful respect for Paul, and the utmost reluctance on the part of Apollos to run any risk of exalting himself at the expense of another. What an example of self-restraint and mutual consideration is presented to us here! Such an example ought to be carefully followed. It is this kind of forbearance which maintains and strengthens friendship, and secures the continuance of co-operation in Christian work.

Friendships thus cemented last long and bear many strains. We are not surprised by the anxiety shown by Paul long afterward for the comfort of Apollos in the prospect of a fatiguing journey. In his Epistle to Titus we find this message: "Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them." Tit. iii. 13. Of Zenas we know nothing, but of Apollos we know much, and we might reasonably conjecture from this passage that he and the apostle had been brought into continually nearer companionship, and that they had often traveled together.

This meditation on the life and work of Apollos, imperfect as it is, may at least serve as an illustration of the large amount of religious instruction which we may secure to ourselves from the study of a Scripture character. Recognition of God's hand in our early training, a good and conscientious use of opportunities,

a ready zeal for Christ's service, humility in learning from those who are farther advanced in the Christian course than ourselves, a cheerful rendering of timely help to those around us, a firm discountenancing of factious party spirit, a considerate care for the reputation and comfort of others,—can we not all, through the Holy Spirit's aid, form such habits of mind as these? The example of Apollos is not above the standard at which we ought to aim. Sometimes the characters of Scripture seem far removed from our own experience, and to belong to another world. Not so here. The pattern is quite on our own level, and singularly suitable for our own times.

This is just the kind of life which, if we are true Christians, we must desire to lead. And we may revert, as we end, to one encouraging thought to which expression was given in the beginning of this sketch. The providential guiding of Apollos was very remarkable. His early knowledge of Christianity began at Alexandria; his mature training was received, and his active work began, at Ephesus; his distinguished public career was run at Corinth. Thus three great cities saw the three stages of his religious progress. Or we may set before our minds this fact of providential guidance in another way. Paul, apparently by accident, meets Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. There, through intercourse with him, they become fitted for influence on a large scale. At Ephesus, Apollos is brought under this beneficial influence. And finally he is laboring at Corinth on the foundation laid by Paul, while the apostle is again co-operating with Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus. We may justly put all this side by side with our own experience in regard to changes of home, of occupation, of companionship, and may draw from it the comfortable assurance that, wherever we are, if we have a true desire to serve God, he will provide for us suitable work and, so far as we need, Christian sympathy.

# XLVI.

## TIMOTHY.

THE last panel in our gallery of sacred portraits must be filled with a slight sketch of Timothy. Our best course is to follow his life chronologically, making such reflections from point to point as naturally suggest themselves. The Epistles enable us to begin our survey from an earlier point than any which is presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles, and show us something of the training of Timothy in his early childhood, and something of his preparation for that subsequent usefulness which marked his career when he became connected in labors with the great apostle to the Gentiles.

The first actual mention of Timothy in Luke's narrative is in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, where he is described as the son of a Jewess who had become a Christian. This prominent mention of *his mother* is somewhat remarkable; and from another source we learn her actual name, and something, too, of her character. Paul, in his latest letter, when writing of the "unfeigned faith" that was in Timothy, adds that such faith had "dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice;" and in another part of the same document he charges him to "continue in the things which he had learned, knowing of whom he had learned them; and that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures." Thus we see that on the feminine side of the family

there had been, for two generations at least, the inestimable blessing of hereditary piety.

It is not a little remarkable that a character which is among the most faultless and charming in the Bible should be the character of that one person whose domestic relations and early training are thus described. And this circumstance is the more observable if we can trace—as we can almost certainly—something of a feminine softness in Timothy, as though his mother's gentle influence had passed into his mind and disposition. The *method*, too, of his early training is very important for us to notice. It was the method of *biblical instruction.* From a child he knew the holy Scriptures. Those Scriptures, of course, in his case, were the Old Testament. We are richer than the Jews by reason of possessing the New Testament in addition. This does not diminish, but rather infinitely increases, the weight we should attach to the Bible as an instrument of instruction. But, again, not only the method, but the spiritual principle, which was at work in this process should be noticed. Even in the Acts of the Apostles the faith of Eunice is made prominent; and here we see that it was the ruling power of life both in her case and in that of Lois. This passage of Holy Writ is full of admonition to Christian households as to the training of the young, and full of encouragement as to the happy results which may be expected from such training.

In tracing this biography onward, we are able still to insert another stage of it before we reach the point where the first mention of Timothy occurs in the Acts. Paul had been at Lystra previously to the time when this young disciple actually joined him there as his traveling companion. Moreover, the apostle speaks of him as "his own son in the faith," which seems to imply beyond a doubt that he himself was the instrument of his conversion. On the occasion, too, of this second visit, Eunice is described as already a believer. All these circumstances point to the conclusion that Timothy was converted

on the occasion of the first visit. And this derives a strong confirmation from a passage in the Second Epistle to Timothy. There it is said that he had fully known and closely followed "the persecutions and afflictions" which came to Paul "at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra." Now, these sufferings occurred to him on the first visit, and the order in which the places are mentioned is the exact geographical order in which Paul was exposed to these trials. And this again leads to another thought. Such sufferings and ill treatment incurred by one who is beloved and respected make a deep impression upon a young mind, and we see in this earliest acquaintance of Paul and Timothy the foundations deeply laid of a warm attachment and allegiance of the latter to the former, as well as an admirable preparation for arduous work and strong endurance. Nor must we forget that the circumstances thus related would bring Timothy into personal acquaintance with Paul's earliest missionary companions, and we cannot well doubt that at this time he became familiar with the noble countenance of him whom the rude Lycaonians instinctively "called Jupiter," as well as with the voice of him whom they named "Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker." Acts xiv. 12.

Barnabas ceased to be Paul's missionary companion, and Silas was taken in his place. We have now passed from the first missionary journey to the second, and are brought to the association of Timothy with Paul in the actual work of evangelization. This point in the apostolic history is carefully marked by Luke, and it is full of instruction for us as to the duty of requiring in those who are to be placed in high ministerial offices the qualification of ascertained fitness. We should also set the passage side by side with sentences in each of the two Epistles to Timothy. Just as Paul urged the memory of this disciple's mother and grandmother to stimulate him to consistency and progress in piety, so he urges him to "stir up the gift of God" which manifestly had been bestowed upon him at the time of the

"laying on of hands" by the apostles and the general body of the presbyters. Evidence was fully supplied as to his personal character at this time. "He was well reported of by all the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." A further reason also for the choice is to be discovered in the words which follow: "Him would Paul have to go forth with him." It is not obscurely intimated here that there was something in Timothy which won the apostle's *personal affection*. He seems to have perceived from the very first—to quote the phrase which he used long afterward to his friend—that he was "like-minded" with himself, and great must have been his joy to have found such a companion in the very neighborhood which, a few years before, had been the scene of so much injustice and suffering. And still another point of fitness for this moment of missionary work remains to be noted. It was a crisis in the history of the Church in regard to the relation between Judaism and Christianity. More need not be said in order to show that in the choice of a fellow-worker for Paul's future labors there was peculiar wisdom in selecting one whose mother was a Jewess, "while his father was a Greek."

The devotion of Timothy and the devotion of his mother also were shown by his willingness to leave her for Christ's service, and the blessing was theirs which the Lord himself promised to such "forsaking" of home "for his name's sake." We now pass to the active employment of Timothy in missionary work, on his second apostolic journey, in conjunction with Paul and his other companions. From this point he took part in the whole Macedonian round, and became one of the founders of the great churches of Philippi and Thessalonica. His name, indeed, is not mentioned by Luke in connection with either place. But we have the apostle's weighty words in testimony of his faithful service at the former city: "*Ye know the proof of him*, that as a son with his father, he served with me in the gospel." That he was not imprisoned there with Paul and Silas is easily accounted

for by his comparative youth and subordination. There might, indeed, be some timidity in his conduct, but we trace his subordination by the order of the three names in the Epistles written soon after to Thessalonica; and it should be remarked, by the way, that these Epistles imply a familiar knowledge of him in that city also. Passing on from Thessalonica to Berea, we find him brought into contact with earnest discussions on the meaning of those Scriptures with which he had been made so well acquainted in his childhood at home; and here his name reappears in the text of the narrative. It is stated that he and Silas were left behind in Macedonia with instructions to rejoin the apostle as soon as their errand should be discharged, and they did rejoin him when he was established in Corinth.

It was arranged in the course of God's providence that Paul should have no companion with him in Athens, and the fact that he was "alone" in that city enhances the force of the unique impression we receive from that most remarkable passage of his life. But what we read of the effect produced upon his mind and work when Timothy, with Silas, rejoined him, tends to show us how much his happiness was increased by the presence of his friends, and what a reserve of actual religious force resided in him in the mere fact of companionship. Some are too ready to throw upon others the work which they ought to do themselves, but he increased in zeal and activity when he could obtain others to help him. The literal meaning of the passage is that on their coming he was "engrossed" or "absorbed" in "the work." The writing of the Epistles to Thessalonica, which followed close upon the arrival of Timothy, shows the high estimate which Paul had formed of him. In allusion to the mission with which he had been recently charged, he describes him as "*his brother*," as "*the minister of God*" and as "*his fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ.*" Nor ought we to fail to notice the confidence implied in the mission itself. Serious troubles had occurred in Thessalonica, and this young disciple was sent to "establish" them

and to "comfort them concerning their faith," so that they "should not be moved by these afflictions." Even this slight notice of what took place during the apostle's journey in Macedonia and Achaia affords a testimony to many excellent and remarkable qualities in one so young and so lately introduced into the work of missionary life. It is also evident that the journey afforded opportunities for gaining invaluable experience.

We have no means of supplying any information concerning Timothy in the interval between his residence at Corinth and the time when the third missionary journey was well begun. He and Silas were, as we have seen, together with the apostle at Corinth. There is every reason to believe that they traveled with him thence, touching at Ephesus on the way, to "the feast in Jerusalem." Possibly Silas remained in Jerusalem; at all events, we do not trace him in company with Paul on the subsequent journey. But Timothy is with him still. And when the apostle is at Ephesus, we find him going over once more, in compliance with his desire, on an errand into Macedonia. Here his name is associated with that of Erastus, as formerly with that of Silas. "Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem: so he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered to him, Timotheus and Erastus." Here we see the same obedience and alacrity on the part of Timothy, the same confidence on the part of Paul. The mode of expression shows that they were intended to prepare his way. If Timothy was to occupy himself with the details of the collection which Paul was at this time busily promoting, even that implied a character well known to be honorable, discreet and trustworthy. But if he was commissioned to assuage, if possible, the party spirit, and to correct the abuses at Corinth, qualities were implied of a still higher and rarer kind. That he was directed to proceed to Corinth we have good proof, and the terms in which he is spoken of in the First Epistle to that place, written soon after his departure, deserve attention. Paul says

in one passage, "I have sent unto you Timotheus, who is *my beloved son*, and *faithful in the Lord*, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, *as I teach everywhere in every church*." Nothing can be more expressive of deep affection and confidential trust; and it may be added, by the way, that if Timothy knew so well what the apostle taught "everywhere in every church," it seems natural to infer that he had been with him in many places where no mention occurs of his name. We are not surprised to read what he says in another part of the same letter: "If Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do." Much time had now elapsed since those two friends had been associated together in this "work of the Lord;" many new circumstances must have occurred to put the character of Timothy to a severe trial; the confidence, however, of the apostle had not been diminished, but rather increased. The relationship remained the same as it had been when they were formerly together at Corinth, and when the gospel was preached among the Corinthians—to use his own words in the Second Epistle—"by me and Silvanus and Timotheus." And if in this anxious wish that his friend should be exposed to *no fear* there is an indication of some timidity of temperament in Timothy, such a circumstance brings us nearer to him in sympathy, while it enables us to appreciate more fully the affection which was felt toward him by Paul.

We have seen that the Epistles to the Corinthians enable us to trace a considerable amount of the occupation of Timothy on this journey, while Paul was outward bound. We can also detect his presence with the apostle at Corinth, the farthest point of the journey; for in the Epistle to the Romans, written there, we find, "Timotheus my workfellow saluteth you." We have no means of illustrating the homeward route in this way; but at Ephesus or in Macedonia or at Corinth we feel almost sure that he must have met Apollos and Titus, as well as Aquila and

Priscilla, and when we see the apostle moving eastward, we find him expressly associated with a large group of companions. "There accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus." How long this large apostolic company continued to travel together we do not know. Some of them were probably trustees for the collection which Paul had been gathering for "the poor saints at Jerusalem." Sopater of Berea, or Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, may have returned to Macedonia from the neighborhood of Ephesus. It is very likely that Tychicus remained there, and possible that Timothy with Gaius went together to their native neighborhoods of Derbe and Lystra. We have no means of deciding the question. All that we know is, that he is not mentioned at any subsequent part of the voyage. Nor is he named in the account of that commotion which took place at Jerusalem immediately after the apostle's arrival. Trophimus, who had been one of the company at Troas, is named; he was the innocent cause of Paul's trouble and suffering; but the name of Timothy appears nowhere. Nor is he spoken of during the time of the imprisonment at Cæsarea. So that we are not able in any way to associate him in our thoughts with Felix or with Festus.

Again, on the voyage from Cæsarea to Rome, it appears almost certain that Timothy cannot have been with Paul, though Aristarchus, another of the Troas party, was with him. Neither on the slow progress from Cæsarea to Myra, nor in the haven on the south coast of Crete, nor on board the ship during the storm, nor in the shipwreck, nor during the three months in Malta, nor on the fine and rapid sail from Malta to the west of Italy, does Luke find any occasion for mentioning Timothy. It is natural to conclude that he was not present. But we know from the Epistles that he soon rejoined his friend in Rome. In the opening of the letters to the Colossians and Philemon, the two names

appear linked together, just as had been the case in those earliest letters sent from Corinth to Thessalonica. Then it was "Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus;" now it is "Paul and Timotheus." Silas is not associated with Paul as formerly, but the close link between him and Timothy still subsists, unbroken by lapse of years and by change of circumstances. And may we not say that the union of these names in the beginning of these letters denotes not only similarity of sentiment, but community of action, if not a certain kind of official connection? Other companions are mentioned in the letters—Demas, for instance, and Luke himself—but they only send a message of Christian love near the close; their signatures are not prefixed to the writing in the formal sending of "grace and peace." So pre-eminent is the confidence placed in Timothy by Paul.

The same remark applies to the Epistle to the Philippians, which belongs to the same imprisonment. But here a passage occurs of so much importance that it must be quoted at length. "I trust in the Lord Jesus," says the writer, "to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me." Very full and varied information regarding the character of Timothy is given to us in this passage. He is contrasted with others as being thoroughly like-minded with the apostle, as having a true and entire sympathy with him, and as being one who could take an honest and genuine interest in the best prosperity of the Philippians. It is implied, too, that he is very different from others, who seek their own advantage and not the honor of Christ; and it is asserted that he had always shown the utmost obedience to the apostle in all that related to the gospel, being to him as a son to a father; and the Philippians are

directly appealed to as knowing, by what they had seen themselves, that this was perfectly true.

Such is the character which we can read in the Epistles written during Paul's first imprisonment, and sent by Onesimus and Epaphroditus, with whom we are sure that Timothy must have conversed often and earnestly. There remain the Epistles written to Timothy himself in a subsequent period, of which we must not attempt to furnish the details. Whatever journeys by land or voyages by sea filled up this concluding space of the great apostle's life, whatever privations or difficulties Timothy himself may have then incurred, one thing is very plain—that he was still at his master's service, ready to stay wherever he might be stationed, ready to go wherever he might be sent. "I besought thee to abide in Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia;" this is the language of the First Epistle. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: do thy diligence to come before winter;" this is the language of the Second. Still it is the same relationship of a son to a father. Still there is the same obedience on one side, still the same confidence on the other. "My beloved son" is the phrase of one Epistle; "My own son in the faith" is the phrase of the other. How great was the trust reposed in Timothy is evident from the commissions which these letters convey. He is to repress false doctrine, to regulate public worship, to ordain faithful ministers, and, above all, to be an *example* "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

And as, in all records of friendship, it is not anything connected with the discharge of public or official responsibilities which leaves the most abiding and definite impression on the mind, but usually some slight incidental circumstances, that indicate the presence of a deep undercurrent of personal feeling, so, in the present instance, the mention of common details, such as might occur in the correspondence of any two friends, comes to our aid, enabling us quite easily and naturally to give the last and most characteristic touch to our picture: "The cloak that I

left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Even in this there is something which seizes strongly on the imagination. We should be glad to know what those books, what those parchments, were. But another passage of the same kind attracts us still more. In the midst of very serious injunctions, the thought of the delicate health of Timothy, and of the danger into which he might fall of neglecting one of his means of usefulness, seems to occur to the affectionate apostle, and he says, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." We might with benefit use this passage as an indication of the temperance of Timothy, and thus as an example to ourselves. Though of a delicate constitution, inherited, perhaps, from his mother, and though liable to weakness and suffering often from fatigue, he was strictly abstemious. But here the quotation is adduced simply to illustrate the personal intimacy which subsisted to the end between the great apostle and the dearest of his companions.

THE END.

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